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1926 Douglas 350cc Model EW



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1930 Norton 500cc Model 18



1949 Velocette 350cc MK V111



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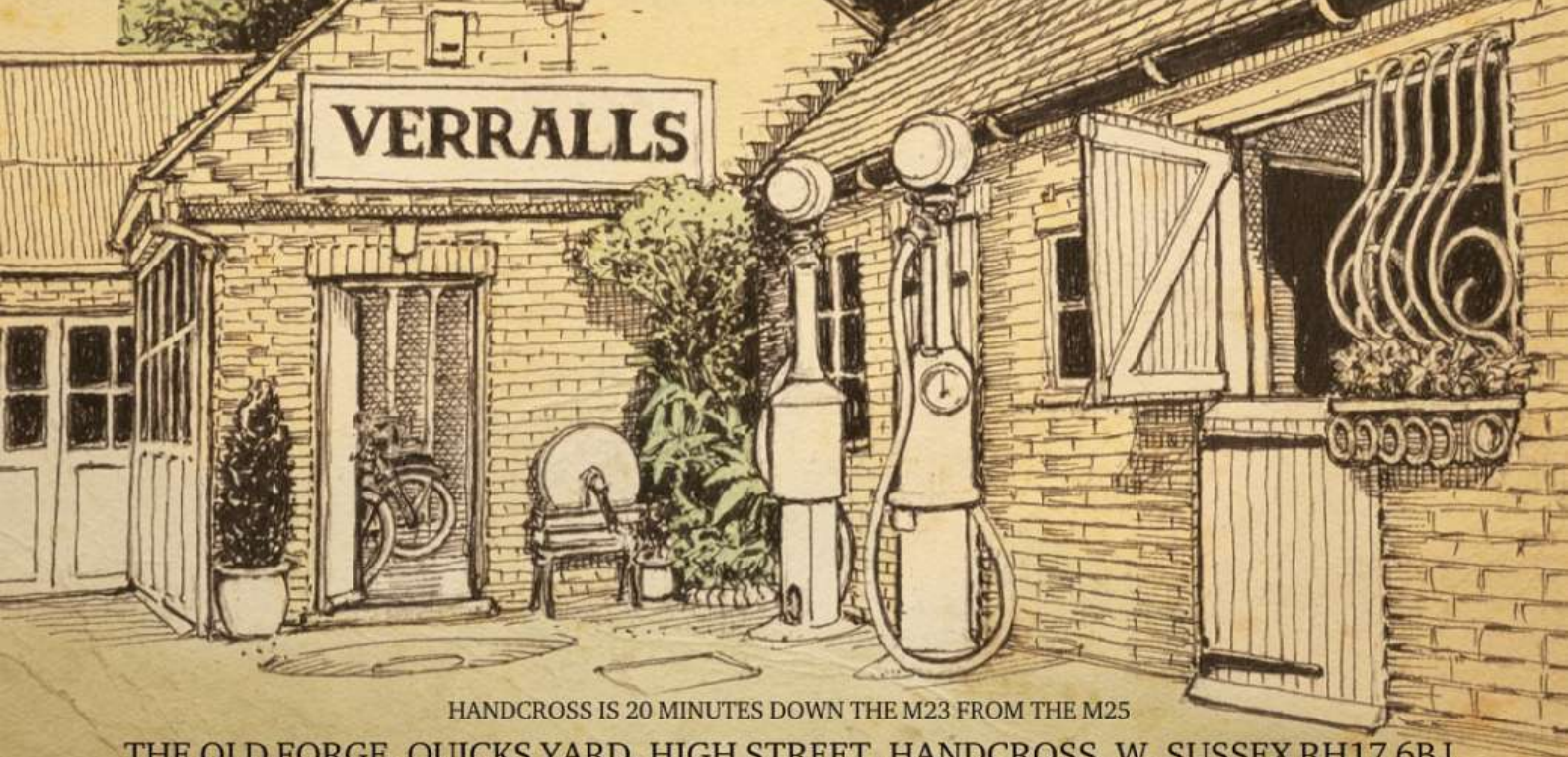
1957 Triumph 650cc Model T110



1959 BSA 500cc Model A7



1973 Velocette 200cc Vogue



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Editor's welcome

SUBSCRIBE NOW FOR ONLY £18.50 page 16

We've included a supplement with this month's issue, put together by Michael, our 22-year-old staff writer, mainly on his own, and I think he's enjoyed the experience and we hope that you do too.

Coventry may not be the most obvious of places on which to focus but the support and enthusiasm of the staff at the city's fabulous transport museum meant it was where we headed; perhaps other places will come under the spotlight in future, we'll have to wait and see.

Personally, this month has been hectic, even more so than usual. I've managed to get in a lot of riding, with, as ever, my highlight being the Irish rally. This year I took my Velocette KTS and borrowed my dad's 1924 Montgomery for a day too. The Velo behaved impeccably, covering the best part of 400 tough miles over three days without missing a beat, though the 120 miles on the oil-cooled 350cc Bradshaw on day four was more memorable in many ways, as it was more of a 'challenge.' A beaded-edge tyred, low powered, hand change, lever throttle machine, up in the hills and mainly in heavy rain, certainly focussed the mind. Brilliant stuff.

Other highlights in the past month have included the Goodwood Revival, a staggering event in so many ways, not least in the way everything is so beautifully staged, arranged and choreographed, and while it is primarily a car event, there are lots of motorcycles (and aeroplanes) there too. It's also great that so many people 'take part' and dress for the occasion too – I revel in any opportunity to wear tweed...

Other days out included riding a Gilera Saturno (see page 32) for the first time, while I reacquainted myself with a Velocette MSS; this one featured in TCM in January 2003 and my dad bought it after the death of Martin Tiller from the person he bequeathed it to and is a 13,000 miles-from-new example. I enjoyed a lovely 120-mile Sunday run on it up the north Norfolk coast.

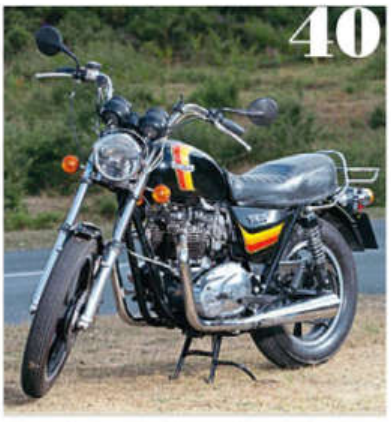
So, as ever it's been a fairly mixed bag of motorcycles ridden (I've also done quite a lot of riding on the Ducati Scrambler, including trip up to Scotland, plus several summer-evening outings on my 1992 750SS Duke) but to me that is the joy of motorcycling. I've also, unfortunately, seen a few fairly serious accidents on motorcycles too, which is not so good, but for the most part it has been a fabulous, diverse and enjoyable experience. And my favourite? The involvement of the Montgomery. Or the dependability of the KTS. Or the sound of the Saturno. Or the ease of the MSS. Or... as ever, it is impossible to decide!

JAMES ROBINSON
Editor









Contributors

Alan Cathcart, Mike Davis, Gordon Hallett, Roy Poynting, Richard Rosenthal, Martin Squires, Jerry Thurston, Phillip Tooth, Alan Turner, Andy Westlake.

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A taste for adventure

For some, motorcycling is quite literally a way of life, and this could not have been truer in the case of experienced rider Miss Violet Porter.

Words: MICHAEL BARRACLOUGH
Photography: MORTONS MEDIA ARCHIVE

Miss Porter, pictured here sitting beside her BSA, was mentioned in *The Motor Cycle* of February 25, 1932, following a 250-mile ride to see Norman 'Wizard' Smith's record attempts at Ninety-Mile Beach in her native New Zealand. It later transpired she was no stranger to long journeys, having covered a staggering 30,000 miles of lone touring on her ever-faithful BSA since August of 1929. She apparently startled the collection of engineers and mechanics that were milling about on Ninety-Mile Beach by appearing just after dawn to see what was going on.

Her motorcycle provides an interesting insight into the various adaptations that were made to the BSA machines sold on the export market – the colonial models, in other words. The BSA seems to be a side-valve S29 'Sloper' model. The side-valve variant of the famous Sloper first joined the BSA roster in 1929, so Miss Porter could well have purchased this bike when it was brand new. The displacement of the slanted engine is more difficult to fathom, though I would be prepared to bet that it is a 500cc model.

The colonial modifications seem to have been twofold. First, the front mudguard is much larger and the forks go right through it as a result. Secondly, note the air filter attached to the carburettor; BSA seems to have included the air filter in anticipation of the dusty, arid environments that these colonial models would be exported to. It is also entirely possible that Miss Porter herself has made some modifications, as she is quite clearly a very experienced motorcyclist and had owned this Beezer for nearly three years when this photograph was taken.

The Sloper was a very popular motorcycle in BSA's prewar line-up. The juxtaposition of the saddle tank and the forward-sloping engine allowed the seat to be dropped to give a lower riding position, thus lowering the centre of gravity and, theoretically, producing better handling and a more responsive riding experience. Another advantage of the Sloper was that it came in a range of engine sizes, both sv and ohv, so every demographic was accounted for.

At around the time that this photograph was taken BSA's slogan was 'One in Four is a BSA', which was of course a statement of fact, as few other marques could touch the far-reaching popularity of the company at the time. It would appear that the top brass at BSA was aware of how people were struggling for money because of the Depression, and so they marketed their motorcycles accordingly. The BSA range of 1930 comprised some 18 different models, and in 1931 this was reduced to 12.

In 1932, the year that this photograph was taken, BSA began including some new fitments on its machines. These included such things as a pawl for locking the front brake lever (which was useful when parking) and a clever little trough at the bottom of the primary chainguard that was topped up with oil from the crankcase, ensuring that the chain was always well-lubricated. The instrument panel, which on previous models had been mounted into the handlebars, could now be found as a single panel set into the top of the petrol tank.

One wonders how many more miles Miss Porter and her S29 Beezer were able to rack up before calling it a day. If she could manage to cover 30,000 miles of solo touring in a mere three years, then it's a fair assumption that she covered many more before stabling her side valve BSA for good.

End

News&Events



Stafford nears

Anticipation is building for the forthcoming Carole Nash Classic Motorcycle Mechanics show at Stafford county showground, on the weekend of October 17/18. Guest of honour is 23 times TT winner John McGuiness.

Though the show is aimed primarily at 1970s/80s classics, there's still always plenty to see and buy for those interested in older machines too. With more and more attractions added each year, it's now more than a single day out to get round.

Coventry supplement



We hope you enjoy our 32 page supplement, which focuses on Coventry and the city's involvement with the motorcycle industry. The booklet was produced in collaboration with the Coventry Transport Museum, which is free to enter and well worth a visit, and to who thanks are extended for their co-operation.

Lord Montagu of Beaulieu

Born in London on October 20, 1926, Edward John Barrington Douglas-Scott-Montagu became a baron in 1929, when he was just over two-and-a-half years old, following the death of his father.

His education took in St Peter's Court, Broadstairs, and Eton, and Oxford, as well as a spell in Canada during the Second World War. He went to Sandown and served in Palestine, too.

Montagu had first started displaying some historic cars at his Beaulieu estate in 1951, in a homage to his father, a motoring pioneer. But his life was changed for ever after two high profile arrests, the second of which led to his conviction and imprisonment for 'consensual homosexual offences.' He served 12 months, but the case proved a landmark in a change of attitude and public opinion and, eventually and consequently, law.

Following his release from prison, Montagu set about establishing Beaulieu as a tourist attraction, and home of the National Motor Museum. Among the many vehicles he secured were some famous motorcycles, including the single-speed Norton 'Old Miracle' and Graham Walker's Ulster GP winning Rudge – indeed, Walker was instrumental in setting up the motorcycle display.

An unstinting supporter of Britain's motoring heritage, Montagu also became chairman of English heritage in 1984. He died on August 31, 2015. Married twice, Montagu's son by his first marriage, Ralph, has inherited the title.



Lord Montagu riding in the 1956 Banbury Run.

Museum Live 2015

The National Motorcycle Museum will host its second annual free open day on October 31, when everyone will be invited to visit the museum – as the name suggests – without paying a penny!

The event will feature a large indoor autojumble held within the warm and dry surroundings of the National Motorcycle Museum's conference facilities. For details of how to book a six foot pitch for £30 contact Steve or George on (0121) 704 2784 or email sales@thenmm.co.uk

The museum's summer 2015 raffle to win a 'Shadowised' 1947 Vincent Series B Rapide will be drawn by Jamie Whitham and Carl Fogarty live on stage during the afternoon, too.

There's still time to win this amazing prize with raffle tickets available to purchase online from www.thenmmshop.co.uk or by calling the Museum on 01675 444140

For further details and updates of Museum Live 2015 see www.thenmm.co.uk

NATIONAL MOTORCYCLE MUSEUM LIVE
WHERE LEGENDS LIVE ON



Bonhams Stafford sale

As ever, there's some mouth-watering machinery in the Bonhams Stafford auction on Sunday October 18, while there's the supplementary auction of the Lonati collection on Saturday too.

Among the many highlights on Sunday are an exquisite Matchless Silver Hawk V-four, while there's another one, in bits, offered too. Add to that a Vincent Black Shadow and ex-Steve McQueen Indian V-twin, and that's just the surface being scratched. The DKW featured last month will be prominent too.

For fans of unrestored machines, there's some treats from the collection of the late John Keeley too, in the shape of 47 mainly 'patinated' pedigree manly vintage and veteran machines too, among them a 680cc Zenith V-twin, plus an 11-50 Brough, shown above.

It is building up to be an epic sale, with something like 230 lots offered over the two days.

Details from www.bonhams.com or 0208 9632817.



Staffy wax jacket

The stylish Staffy wax jacket from Spada proved durable, comfortable and warm during some really heavy rain and general 'weather' during the recent Irish rally, keeping everything out which, given the conditions, was no mean feat. It looks great too, with the leather patterned shoulder detail especially nice.

It has inbuilt CE-improved armour as well and is available in brown or black – personally, I really like the brown. At £159.99 it is really good value too. Go to www.spadaclothing.co.uk or call 01384 413841 for details of your local stockist.

Charterhouse auction

The inaugural auction held by Sherbourne, Dorset based company Charterhouse at the Netley Marsh autojumble sold a good proportion of its lots, though the two headlining machines (a 1912 Piece single and a 1950 Vincent Rapide in Chinese red) remained unsold. Offering further down the monetary scale fared rather better, with noteworthy prices including £12,880 for a 1933 V-twin AJS and a very smart fastback Commando at £7280. But most astonishing price of the day was surely the £8614 paid for the Reg Thomas archive of ephemera relating to Royal Enfield. Estimate was £300-500.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MECUM IN VEGAS
Motorcycles are being sought for consignment to Mecum's Las Vegas auction on January 7-9, 2016. Have a look at www.mecum.com or contact the motorcycle division (262) 275 5715.

COPDOCK MOTORCYCLE SHOW
Be quick for the Copdock motorcycle show, on October 4, at Trinity Park, Ipswich.

VETERAMA 2015
The gargantuan Veterama car and motorcycle jumble takes place on October 9-11 in Mannheim, Germany. Over 45,000 visitors are expected over the weekend. Visit www.veterama.de or call 0049 (0) 6203 13507.

CHEFFINS AUCTION IN OCTOBER
An auction of vintage and classic motorcycles, cars, steam engines, commercial and tractors, is to be held at the Cheffins saleground, Sutton, near Ely, Cambs, on October 17. Details from 01223 213777.

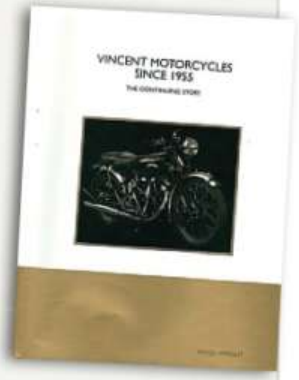
BONHAMS SALE AT HENDON
Entries are invited for Bonhams sale at the RAF museum, Hendon, on December 10. Call 0208 963 2817 or www.bonhams.com/motorcycles

CLASSIC MACHINES AT RESTO SHOW
The Royal Bath and West showground, Shepton mallet, plays host to the Classic Vehicle Restoration Show on November 7-8. Details and tickets from www.carsandevents.com or 01507 529529.

NEW WEBSITE
The National Motorcycle Museum has launched a new website. Have a look at **www.nationalmotorcyclemuseum.co.uk**

Book Review

Vincent Motorcycles since 1955 The continuing story



AUTHOR: David Wright
PUBLISHED BY
the Vincent HRD Owners Club
PO Box 680, Orpington BR6 8WS
TEL: 01536 312220 www.voc.uk.com
Hardback, 210mm x 280mm, 336 pages, with over 650 black and white and colour photographs and illustrations
ISBN 978-0-9535010-9-0
£35 INCLUDING UK P&P

It is almost 60 years since the last large-capacity motorcycle left the factory of Vincent Engineers (Stevenage) in 1955.

In the following six decades Vincent motorcycles have been owned by successive generations of riders, during which the black and gold machines have moved from being primarily utilitarian and sporting devices, to serve as leisure vehicles and, increasingly, as collectors' items. They have also changed from being the machine-of-the-moment, to ones that are a respected part of the ever-growing vintage movement.

It was Philip Conrad Vincent who started the story of Vincent motorcycles when he set-up as a manufacturer in 1928, buying Howard Davies' original HRD trademark and making his own rear-sprung models and later with the unusual but very successful collaboration between this public-school educated idealist and the brilliant, but more down-to-earth Australian engineer, Phil Irving.

Production continued until 1955, when the ever-increasing costs of an already extremely expensive machine, meant it was no longer profitable to build 'The World's Fastest Standard Motorcycle.' His efforts as a manufacturer are well-documented elsewhere, but this book, which does include an introduction to the marque, continues the story by taking a wide-ranging look at the world of Vincent motorcycles since 1955. It includes that of private owners, those who have attempted to resurrect the product, those who have gone down the alternative routes and the many who have used them in competition. We read of Brian Chapman's supercharged Comet-based special, 'Mighty Mouse,' becoming in 1977 the fastest 500cc sprinter in the world – covering the quarter-mile in just 8.9 seconds, also that multi-sidecar grass track champion Stuart Towner, with passenger Michael Payne, is still a force to be reckoned with, regularly beating much later machines in open class racing with his Alan Jones Vincent twin special outfit.

It also tells of the successful efforts of people who have worked to ensure that Vincent wheels can be kept turning – indeed, Frenchman Patrick Godet will build you, to order, a complete brand-new Godet Egli Vincent – 60 years after the production ceased and of the myths and legends that have been attached to the name.

There is much to tell, some of it coming from the contributions of owners with knowledge of particular aspects of the mark and also from the specially commissioned words of motorcycling journalists such as Bruce Main-Smith, Ray Knight, Dave Minton and Mick Duckworth, together with many photographs by Geoff Preece. A top-quality and well researched reference book that even non-Vincent owners will enjoy.

Jonathan Hill



John Young's Hinckley Triumph Explorer outside 8 Philip Walk, in 2014.

Triumph visit

Six years ago a blue plaque went up on 8 Philip Walk, the house in Peckham, London, where Triumph's Edward Turner lived in the 1920s. It was unveiled by E T's son, with the late Tony Benn and former Meriden co-op chairman John Rosamond present.

More recently, the plaque has been one of the 90-odd locations which entrants in the IBA (Iron Butt Association) UK Brit Butt Rally could visit for bonus points. Last year the 36 hour, approximately 1500 mile long-distance contest featured six or seven of the 47 participants riding Triumphs – but they were the Hinckley-built variety.

One was Rallymaster (and eventual winner) John Young, on his modern Triumph Explorer; he used it again to come second in this year's rain-sodden German equivalent. "Quite a few riders last year went (to the plaque)," John confirmed, "but none were on Meriden Triumphs – I'm the only person stupid enough to have attempted the IBA rallies on a Meriden bike!"

The triple enthusiast was referring to his sensational feat of endurance in 2011 on the original USA Iron Butt Rally, when he covered 11,000 miles in 11 days, through 48 States, that's all of them except Hawaii and Alaska on a 1969 T150 Trident.

E T, himself game to successfully undertake the 150cc Terrier-mounted Land's End to John O'Groats 'Gaffers' Gallop' in 1953, would surely have approved.

Words: Steve Wilson
Photograph: John Young







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*All cover is subject to insurers terms and conditions, which is available upon request. **1954 NortonES2. Value: £4500. Main policy only and does not include any FJ+ cover options. All premiums assume it is not the main vehicle and includes Insurance Premium Tax. Male rider aged over 25 years old, 2000 annual limited mileage, and full clean driving licence with no claims or convictions. Member of associated club. Postcode OX10, vehicle garaged with no modifications. Includes a £10 arrangement fee.

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Glorious Goodwood

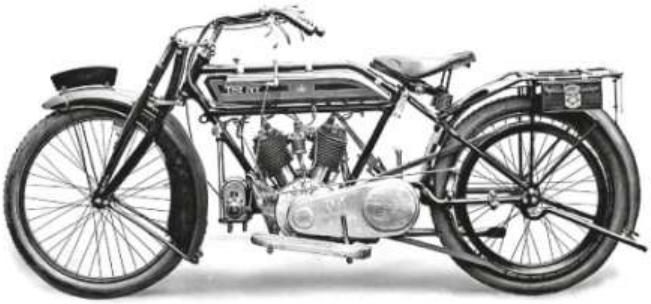
Once again, the Goodwood Revival was a thrilling success, with a crowd of just shy of 150,000 heading to the historic race circuit near Chichester for a weekend of nostalgia and racing. Two motorcycle races (one Saturday, one Sunday) were both won by the two-rider Jeremy McWilliams/Duncan Fitchett combination, with Michaels Rutter and Russell runners up. Both were on Manx Nortons. Star names riding included American ex world champions Kevin Schwantz and Freddie Spencer.



Classic TT

The Classic TT once again attracted a fabulous and varied entry, with the blue riband 500cc Classic Senior won by young Yorkshireman Dean Harrison, on the Black Eagle MV Agusta three, shown above at the Railway Pub. Second was Ian Lougher (Paton) with Lee Johnston, MV, third. Michael Rutter enjoyed Junior success on Ripley Land's Honda.

Photograph by Peter Faragher



THE WAY WE WERE IN

NOVEMBER

1915

Over recent weeks details had arrived on more new models offered for the coming 1916 season.

Although available for months in America, Indian planned to import the 7hp side-valve Powerplus V-twin to the UK and had launched a three-speed Model K two-stroke model.

Ivy had improved its recently announced 4-5hp twin, shown above, by fitting a three-speed gearbox complete with kick starter. And Levis had supplied photographs of an air cooled 6hp fore-and-aft flat twin cylinder two-stroke model and were planning a water cooled version.

Mr A A Scott has published a number of patents for aspects of a three-wheeled cyclecar, his most recent details the chassis design wheel layout and steering.

The water cooled twin cylinder engine is mounted to the vehicle's rights side with shaft drive to the offside rear wheel. While the driver and passenger sat side by side, its overhung wheels negating the need for motorcycle type forks are positioned as with a motorcycle and sidecar.

Unofficially, it was understood this vehicle was being developed as a guncar for military applications.

1940

The Treasury had accepted a £10,000 loan from the Cycle and Motor Cycle Manufacturers and Traders Union for the duration of the war.

And it was learned the famous music hall comedian Will Hay had become one of the latest recruits to motorcycling. He rode daily from his North London home to the Ealing Studios where he was engaged in film work.

1965

The BBC Television Grandstand Trophy scramble series began the previous Saturday with the televised meeting from Aberduhonw.

Andy Lee (Metisse) and Dave Nicoll (Matchless) powered into the lead of the 500cc Grandstand Trophy race but world champion Jeff Smith (441cc BSA) then tore through the field from sixth to first and remained in front to take the flag ahead of Chris Horsfield (360cc CZ) and Alan Clough (360cc Greeves).

Of the Greeves men, Alan Clough shot ahead in the Grandstand Trophy 250cc race, leaving Dave Bickers chasing in his wake to the flag. While Jeff Smith led Vic Eastwood (both 441cc BSAs) home with Chris Horsfield (360cc CZ) third in the first invitation race Dave Bickers (246cc Greeves) went on a giant slaying exercise during the second to beat the big singles of Smith and Lee.

1990

The Wiltshire Branch of MAG (Motorcycle Action Group) published an information sheet entitled Proof Reading. Although aimed at motorcyclists the leaflet, which has been distributed to libraries, the police and politicians, aims to persuade all drivers to make roads alcohol free zones.

Richard Rosenthal



Albert Simpkin diary

Further to the article carried in our October issue, the book Despatch Rider on the Western Front 1915-18: The Diary of Sergeant Albert Simpkin, MM, edited by David Venner, has the ISBN 9781473827400 number and is a hardback of 224 pages.

There's details at www.despatch-rider-on-the-western-front.co.uk, and it's published by Pen and Sword Books www.pen-and-sword.co.uk



Just some of the eclectic mix at the 2015 Sammy Miller Run.

Sammy Miller Run 2015

The 18th Sammy Miller Run was held on Sunday, August 30, with just under 100 participating. A veteran run of 30 miles was included this year along with the usual longer 52 mile ride.

The riders were waved off by Percy Gosling, Clerk of the Course. Lunch this year was by provided by the Bashley Manor Tea Rooms in the Museum Complex and was ready when riders returned to the Museum. After lunch, awards were presented by motorcycling legend, Don Rickman.



Diary

YOUR EVENT SHOULD BE HERE

The Classic MotorCycle is anxious to learn all about your motorcycle-related events. Contact us at *The Classic MotorCycle*, Mortons Media Ltd, Diary Listings, PO Box 99, Horncastle, Lincs LN9 6LZ or email obmfreeads@mortons.co.uk

OCTOBER 2015

OCTOBER 1

Krazy Horse Late Nights, Muscle Mayhem, Empire House, Lark Valley Business Park, Bury St Edmonds, Suffolk IP32 6NU
Tel 01284 749645.
www.krazyhorse.co.uk

OCTOBER 2

Classic Bike & Car Meet, The Victoria, Coalville, Leics LE67 3FA.
Tel 01530 814718.
www.vicbikerspub.co.uk

Steve Parrish MAD Tour, The Capitol, Horsham, West Sussex RH12 1RG. www.madtour.co.uk

OCTOBER 3

Rufforth Autojumble, Rufforth Park, York YO23 3QH.
www.rufforthautojumble.com

Ride to the Wall, from various locations in the country, converging to National Memorial Arboretum, Croxall Road, Alrewas, Staffordshire DE13 7AR. Tel 01283 792333.
www.ridetothewall.co.uk

Skillshare Morning, The Aviator Restaurant, Gloucestershire Airport, Staverton, Gloucestershire GL51 6SR.
skillshare@glos-roadar.co.org.uk
www.rospa-roadar.org/glos

Early Motor Bicycle Run, The Lion and Unicorn, Thornhill, Stirling FK8 3PJ. VMCC Highland Section.
jmacmillan@talktalk.net

OCTOBER 4

Classic Motorcycle Show, Jackmans, Letchworth.
Tel 07963 609143.

Craven Collection Motorcycle Museum, Open Day, Brockfield Villa, Stockton on the Forest, York YO32 9UE. Tel. 01904 400493.

The British Two Stroke Club Ltd, Rutland Borders Run, The Rose & Crown, Tilton, Leics. Eric Hathaway 01162 750532.

Newton Abbot Autojumble, The Cattle Market (town centre) TQ12 1TG. Pete Dear 07977 643852.

Hornet Swarm & Hondas, Ace Cafe London NW10 7UD.
www.ace-cafe-london.com

Classic Motorcycle Show, Yorkshire Waterways Museum, Dutch River Side, Goole DN14 5TB.
Tel 01405 768730.
www.waterwaysmuseum.org.uk

The Hen and Chickens, Baldock South Road. Tel. 07963 609143 or 01462 894111.

OCTOBER 4-6

Lothian & Borders Classic & Vintage MCC Autojumble, Drill Hall Walkershaugh, Peebles, Scottish Borders EH45. Email:
dennisbelleville@gmail.com

OCTOBER 7

VMCC (Essex) Wrinkly Run, Costa car park, Tollgate Centre, Stanway, Colchester CO3 8RG, 9.30 for 10am. Terry Windsor 01206 384764.

OCTOBER 8

LE Velo (Lancs & S Lakes) Bridge House Cafe, Wray, near Lancaster, 11 for 12. Tel 01772 782516.

OCTOBER 9

Classic Bike & Car Meet, The Victoria, Coalville, Leics LE67 3FA.
Tel 01530 814718
www.vicbikerspub.co.uk

OCTOBER 10

Lincs BTSC Autumn Leaf Run from Coningsby Moorside. Bob or Maureen 01526 345720.

Gloucester Autojumble, Hempstead Meadows, David Hook Way, Gloucester GL2 5LE. Paul Powell 07831 421455.

Wetherby Autojumble, Wetherby Racecourse LS22 5EJ. www.wetherbyautojumble.co.uk

OCTOBER 10-11

National Motorcycle Races (No Limits Racing), Donington Park, Castle Donington, Derbys DE74 2RP.
www.donington-park.co.uk

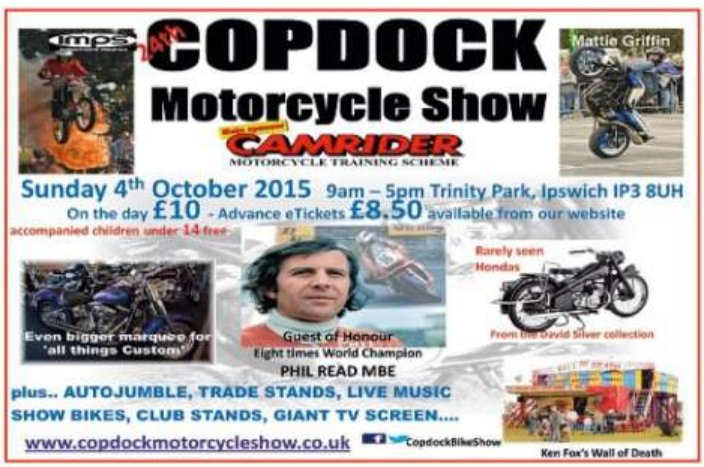
OCTOBER 11

'Normous Newark, Newark Showground, Notts NG24 2NY.
www.newarkautojumble.co.uk

VMCC (Northampton) Jim's Jaunt. Hunsbury Country Park, 10am. Jim Poole 01604 766734.

VMCC (Essex) Huffer Run. Norton Heath, cafe just off the A414, 10 for 10.30. Dick Hobart 01245 473359.







Send your diary entries to **obmfreeads@mortons.co.uk**

Autojumble, Manchester Road, Rixton, near Warrington WA3 6EA. T Taylor 07860 648103.
Kenley Autojumble, The Portcullis Club, Kenley Airfield, Victor Beamish Avenue, Caterham CR3 5FX (just off Jct 6, M25). www.faceboowk.com/KenleyAutojumble

OCTOBER 12

Brit V's (Vincents & Velocette) & Classic Bike Day, Ace Cafe London NW10 7UD. www.ace-cafe-london.com

OCTOBER 14

Donington Ladies Only Day with Maria Costello, Donington Park, Castle Donington, Derby DE74 2RP. 01727 827794. http://bit.ly/1EPT4s4

OCTOBER 15

Dorset Vintage & Classic Auctions, Athelton House, near Dorchester, Dorset DT2 7LG. For full details see www.dvca.co.uk

OCTOBER 16

Classic Bike & Car Meet, The Victoria, Coalville, Leics LE67 3FA. Tel 01530 814718. www.vicbikerspub.co.uk

OCTOBER 17

17 Scorton Giant Auto/Bike Jumble, North Yorkshire Events Centre DL10 6EH. Bert 07909 904705.

OCTOBER 17-18

The 22nd Carole Nash Classic Motorcycle Mechanics Show, Stafford County Showground ST18 0BD. www.classicbikeshows.com

OCTOBER 18

LE Velo (Lancs & S Lakes) Heysham Old Town, 11 for 12. Tel 01772 782516.
Garstang Autojumble, Hamilton House Farm, Garstang, Preston PR3 0TB. Ian Sherrard 07836 331324 (day) or 01772 323654 (6-8pm). www.garstangautojumbles.co.uk
Red Oktober, Eastern Bloc Vehicle Day, Ace Cafe London NW10 7UD. www.ace-cafe-london.com
Hoggin' the Bridge, Brightside Group plc car park BS35 4BH. www.hogginthebridge.co.uk

OCTOBER 23

Classic Bike & Car Meet, The Victoria, Coalville, Leics LE67 3FA. Tel 01530 814718. www.vicbikerspub.co.uk

OCTOBER 24

Kempton Bike Jumble, Kempton Park Racecourse, Sunbury-on-Thames TW16 5AQ. www.egp-enterprises.co.uk

OCTOBER 25

12th Suffolk Autojumble, Church Farm, Kettleburgh, near Woodbridge, Suffolk IP13 7LF Tel. 01728 724858 (before 9pm)
South of England 'Real Classic' Show & Bikejumble, South of England Showground, Ardingly, West Sussex RH17 6TL. Tel 01797 344277 www.elk-promotions.co.uk







THE CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE

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We're not perfect, we know it, but we are keen, we are real riders and we are happy and privileged to share our enthusiasm. So come and join *The Classic MotorCycle* family, you'll be most welcome.

James.

James Robinson, editor

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Readers Letters

YOUR VOICE & YOUR OPINIONS

Understanding the Ariel Arrow

Roy Poynting's story 'Straight Arrow' (October 2015 issue) tells it very much like it was with Ariel Arrows, but designer Val Page and his assistant Bernard 'Foggy' Knight had nothing to do with the styling of the Arrow.

The Ariel Arrow model resulted from Jack Wickes' restyling at his Meriden office in 1961, where he often pulled my leg by referring to it as Ariel's "Bleeder". He invited me to inspect it when he had an Ariel Leader stripped of its sheet metal and covered in acres of plasticine as he restyled it into what became the Arrow. Jack Wickes, who Edward Turner referred to as "his pencil", was responsible for much of the styling with which Triumph was renowned. He had joined Triumph in 1931 after leaving school and trained at Coventry Technical College as a Design Draughtsman. As a natural artist, he was responsible for much of the design detail all too often attributed to Edward Turner.

Jim Lee, Ariel Marque Specialist at the VMCC, via email.



Peter Pykett trials replica

I saw in an issue (August 2014) of the magazine that a reader was requesting information about a Peter Pykett trials machine. I own a replica trials machine built by Peter Pykett, registered in 1950 and reregistered in 1985. It was built at Thruxton aerodrome, Hampshire. With regards to whether Peter is still alive, I am unsure. I have attached a picture (above) of my replica trials machine for your readers to enjoy.

David Peterson, via email.

Motorcycling in the Royal Flying Corps

In your September 2015 issue there was mention of the P&M 500cc 3½hp motorcycle issued to the Royal Flying Corps in 1915. My grandfather joined the newly-formed RAF in May 1918 and was sent with the BEF to France as a motorcyclist. I attach a photo of him (right) piloting such a P&M outfit.

My own interest in motorcycles started in the late 1950s, when I was mesmerised by a near matching pair of bronze BSA combinations owned by two of my father's friends. Early in 1968 I swopped my 150cc Francis Barnett Plover for an ex-AA BSA M21, complete with aerodynamic fibreglass 'box' on the third wheel, bought from Dawsons Motors of Nottingham for £65.

The day it was delivered to rural Suffolk, I removed the fibreglass fairing and leg shields, and slowly started to ride this monster (with a mind of its own!) around the lanes. I successfully made it round the first two bends, but at the third my mount chose to go straight on over a low bank and into a shallow ditch. Thankfully, there was no damage to either of us, and I was soon pulled out (backwards) by an amused farmworker on his tractor. But I persevered, and grew to love that bike more than the other three I rode between 1967 and 1984.

Sadly, I haven't ridden two (or three) wheels since, but I'll never stop looking, and reading the mags.



I have my daughter and son-in-law to thank for buying me a subscription to *The Classic MotorCycle* last Christmas, and I look forward to it every month.

Bob Richardson, Clanfield, Hampshire.

Praise for Martin Squires

It was lovely to see Martin Squires' sketches of dad's bikes in *The Classic MotorCycle's* October 2015 issue – they are literally works of art and dad would have loved them. Martin is such a nice bloke. I have interrupted him several times while busy sketching and he never seems to mind!

I ran the Scott and the Triumph at the recent Ramsgate Revival; a brilliant weekend with so many memories of passengering there on different sidecar outfits in the late 1950s and 60s. I can never hope to ride the bikes as fast or as well as dad, or brother Pat, but at least they are still racing! I enjoy it so much.

Thank you again and thank you Martin – I still have some that you haven't seen yet!

Sheelagh Neal, Great Shelford, Cambridgeshire.

WRITE TO: The Classic Motorcycle, PO Box 99, Horncastle, Lincolnshire, LN9 6LZ
EMAIL: jrobinson@mortons.co.uk **FAX:** 01507 529495

Family ties



Attached is a photograph – the only photo, right, of my mum and dad on dad's Velo taken around the early to mid-1950s.

Dad was a subscriber to this wonderful magazine until he passed away some 10 years ago. Mum took over the subscription, and I read every word of every issue too.

My own motorcycling life began with a Puch 250cc SGS split single, and progressed to a T120V Bonneville, which led to a 1982 Ducati 900SS. I sold the Ducati recently after 26 years of ownership and I am now contemplating my next move!

Motorcycling runs deep in our family and having recently uncovered this beautiful photograph, both mum and I would love to know anything at all about dad's Velo... including the off-chance that it is still around.

If anyone has any knowledge, we would be most grateful if it could be shared with us, either in the magazine or by email.

Mum, at 83, is still very active and was riding pillion on a friend's Velocette MAC just a few months back... I think she mentioned that it wasn't fast enough! Thank you for any help you may be able to offer, and thank you for this magic magazine.

Neil Hawes, New Zealand, via email.



The mystery engine

Please check out the attached photograph (above) showing the timing side of another mystery engine I investigated a few years ago – as you can see there is massive similarity to the one on page 93 of the story entitled 'The mystery engine' in the September 2015 issue of *The Classic MotorCycle*.

The bottom chunk of the engine seen on page 93 is almost certainly one of the Norton twin cylinder prototype engines designed by Jack Moore after the Second World War, predating the Norton Dominator Model 7.

The strange gearbox mentioned in the same article is probably connected with the engine through another postwar Norton design by Edgar Franks. He was tasked with designing a new Norton twin and chose to go for an 'inline' engine with a rear drive similar to that of a Sunbeam S7/S8.

Phil Hannam, via email.

Help with some fact hunting

I was writing on the off-chance someone might be able to advise how I might trace old motorbike race records from the 1930s in the vicinity of Ashford, Kent.

My father (C J Waghorne) competed in a number of motorcycle races and I was hoping to find a bit more information about what occurred. It is another one of those questions I forgot to ask him when he was alive. A number of trophies survive with reference to "The Kent Motor Club" dated 1932.

I gather from web searches that this organisation no longer exists and maybe morphed into the Maidstone and Mid Kent Motor Club, which was formed in 1935 and seems to be of similar scope and region.

I appreciate any assistance you can give.

Ted Waghorne, Kew, Victoria, Australia.
waghorne@sympac.com.au

Ariel-Minerva



I particularly enjoyed your description of the Ariel-Minerva in September's issue because I have ridden its almost identical twin Quadrant with the similar – but slightly earlier (1902) – Minerva engine in the Pioneer run each year for most of the last 12 years.

You printed five photos of the right side but only one thumbnail picture of the left, where the interesting bits of engine valve gear, ignition, crank case breather etc. all sit. Might we be able to see what's on the messy, interesting side of the machine please rather than the photogenic side?

For those who might be interested, the Quadrant uses 'gas' (i.e. 'SBP2' solvent) fuel with a surface carburettor. Ignition is simply by contact breaker with a conventional coil using a 12 volt battery with no charging system. Thus the contact breaker cam is just a small 'blip' on the rotor so that as little time is spent as possible sucking current from the battery.

At present the tyres are merely the biggest bicycle tyres I could find on the high street. I'd be interested in details of those used on the Ariel – or any others that are suitable for the cycle rims. Keep up the good work with the magazine!

David Cooper, London.

Take to the streets

The 2015 GP de Tours took place at the end of June.

Words and photography: MIKE DAVIS

Tours is a wonderfully cosmopolitan event even if, in the parc fermé, you could detect a little nationalism. On one side, the Brits – Triumph, Norton, BSA and Matchless – and on the other, the Europeans – Ducati and BMW. Remind you of anything? But no, it's just how the organiser, Christian Hervet, decided to arrange things for the numerous classic motorcycle fans who thronged the enclosure; closely examining the vehicles, engaging their owners in discussion over the marques' pros and cons, helping push start recalcitrant machines and generally enjoying the relaxed, enthusiast-centric environment.

While the participants at Tours are on two, three and four wheels, motorcycles are best suited to the tight, narrow circuit over the city centre streets that, for the other 364 days in the year, are crowded with cars, buses and trams. But on this day, classic motorcycles had the freedom of those streets and nearly 40 exercised that with relish.

The morning saw an interesting battle of the Desmos – and kept in the family! Father and son Christian and Thomas Hervet pitched against each other, one on his 1971 450 and the other on a 350 of the same year. Although a demonstration event, with no 'winners' as such, most informed spectators agreed that Thomas emerged the victor of the Ducati duel. Both riders knew their machines well and handled them skilfully, not least at speed through the 180^0 bend linking the outbound and home straights. These race-prepared lightweight speedsters were in their element on this circuit, even if their throttles couldn't be opened fully to show their true potential.

The Hervets' Desmos weren't the only Ducatis on the track. Boric Kessler, on his 350cc Desmo, joined them later, creating a triumvirate of 1971 Desmos. Keeping them company was Michel Delagarde's 1976 500 GTL. Gregory Benoist's 1975 860 GT and Olivier Vinot's 1982 900 Darmah created a Ducati sextet. But these machines are kings of the open road, rather than a short street circuit. They purred while the Desmos snarled and fought like wildcats on the track.

Jean Hougron's 1971 BSA B50SS attracted considerable interest, being a motorcycle little seen in France and really looking the 'street scrambler' part. Sadly it stayed in the paddock, denying the crowd the opportunity to see if, on the track, it performed as well as it looked. Such criticism couldn't be levelled at Richard Leroy's Triumph twin. He enjoyed himself so much that the difficulty was getting him off the track! Maybe this was because Triumphs were most numerous of the British bikes at Tours; 1966, 1968 and 1970 Bonnevilles, ridden by Thierry Conré, Yves Delamarre and Patrick Lucas; the 1967 Trophy of Eric Innocenti; and Thierry Girard's 1970 TR6R. As usual, Marc Juillet's 1957 Matchless G11 was the doyenne in this category. And finally Jean-Yves Lemel's 1967 Norton P11, the sole representative of the marque, acquitted itself creditably on the circuit.

At the day's end Christian Hervet expressed himself well satisfied with the moto element of the Tours GP. 'Yes,' he said, 'it was a lot of work organising the event, both beforehand and on the day. I spent more time at a desk than on my Ducati and BMW. But the riders and the spectators seem to have enjoyed themselves and that's most important to me.' When asked if he perceived any way the event might be improved, he reflected and then replied: 'we had British bikes on the circuit and British spectators in the crowd – but where were the British riders, wanting that rare opportunity to compete on a street circuit?' The hesitant response – 'l'année prochaine, peut-être?' So. will British classic motorcyclists take up his challenge at the 2016 Tours GP? End

1 1971 450cc Ducati Desmo of Christian Hervet.

2 Jean Yves Lemel, 1967 Norton P11, preparing to leave parc fermé.

3 The Triumphs of Richard Leroy and Yves Delamarre sandwich Jean Hougron's BSA B50SS.



1


2


3

NATIONAL MOTORCYCLE MUSEUM LIVE

FREE OPEN DAY

SATURDAY 31ST OCTOBER 2015

Utilizing both the Museum and our extensive conference facilities Saturday 31/10/15 will see the National Motorcycle Museum host our 2nd annual free open day when we will throw open the doors of the Museum and everyone will be invited to visit the Museum collection free of charge. Not only that but there will be a host of other free attractions including two amazing "Stars On Stage" events featuring the bikes, the stars and the people behind it all!



Free Museum Entry:

Everyone will be invited to visit the museum collection, free-of-charge. To assist visitors everyone arriving on site will be given a free timetable with a full list & timings of all the day's events!



Indoor Autojumble:

The event will feature a large indoor autojumble held within the warm & dry surroundings of the National Motorcycle Museum's conference facilities. For details of how to book a 6ft pitch for just £30.00 contact Steve or George on (0121) 704 2784 or e-mail sales@thenmm.co.uk

Museum Partners & Trade Displays: Throughout the day we will have special feature "tables" showcasing some of the specialist suppliers & craftsmen (including the Museum's own restoration team) who will be available to chat and answer questions. The event will also feature trade stands & displays from many well-known names including Bonham's Auctioneers and Footman James Insurance brokers.



Stars On Stage: Hosted by Carl Fogarty & Jamie Whitham

Carl Fogarty & Jamie Whitham will host two special "Stars On Stage" features at 11.00am & 2.00pm on Saturday 31/10/15. Held on the stage of one of the Museum's magnificent suites these free 1 hour chat shows will feature both Carl & Jamie as well as other motorcycling personalities & live "fire ups" of some of the most iconic race machines from the Museum's inventory.

Motorcycle "Try a Bike" Training:

Wheels Motorcycle Training will be giving visitors the chance to "try a bike" free of charge during Saturday 31/10/15. Everyone from just 16 years of age* will have the opportunity to learn to ride in a controlled environment. Because of this features popularity you can pre-book by contacting Wheels Motorcycle Training on 0121 328 9906 or e-mail enq@2wheelstraining.com

Celebrity Book Signings:

Various motorcycling personalities will be available to sign copies of their books in the Museum shop during the event.

Museum Shop & Restaurant:

The Museum shop and restaurant will be open throughout the day serving breakfast, lunch & a range of hot meals & snacks.

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Our summer 2015 raffle to win a "Shadowised" 1947 Vincent Series B Rapide worth over £40,000 will be drawn by Carl Fogarty & Jamie Whitham live on stage during the afternoon of the Museum's open day on 31/10/15 at 3.00pm

There's still time to win this amazing prize with raffle tickets available to purchase online from www.thenmmshop.co.uk or by calling the Museum on 01675 444140

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Wandering to Germany

The purchase of a German-made machine and a quest for information leads to a continental jaunt to take in an event.

Words and photography:
GORDON HALLETT

The purchase of a Wanderer from the veteran period in need of more than a bit of TLC had me scratching my head. Help was needed, so I took the engine and photographs to the Sunbeam MCC's Pioneer Run finish at Brighton, in March. There, I met up with a couple of Wanderer marque experts, namely Dr. Martin Schenker and Heinz Kindler, author of a book on the Saxony maker.

After more head scratching and some advice, Heinz gave me a pamphlet and an invite to the Ninth International VFV/ADAC Vintage Motorcycle Weekend of North Germany, open to pre-1945 motorcycles, and scheduled for July 17-19, 2015. It looked interesting and might be useful too, so a travel plan was formulated.

1 A few machines in the line up.

2 Sunday morning rain didn't put anyone off.

3 A beauty from Redditch; Royal Enfield 182 and sidecar, from 1927.

4 A German-made version of the Triumph.

Come the date, I loaded up the motorhome and set off for Germany. Serious delays at Dover meant a lot of lost time and the Saturday run, featuring about a dozen riders from the UK, had already started by the time I arrived at Kaltenkirchen, about 20 miles north of Hamburg.

The venue was great. There was a really good camping field, with an oval perimeter roadway, where the bikes did a lap at the start and finish. This year, the New Imperial Club was the special guest, with five New Imps coming from the UK. The rally format was a ride per day, timed or untimed, with a cold start test too.

At about 4.30pm the first riders were arriving back from the 100km (so 62 miles) run, which took them close to the Danish border, along the edge of the Grouber















Pioner Zee. Some of the motorcycles were new to me; Frisch, Achilles and D-Rad, to name a few. The variation was incredible. As an added bonus, a selection of vintage cars followed, with wives and families on board.

The evening was one of music and dance (and beer!) in a huge marquee. It rounded the day off brilliantly and gave the riders a chance to steel themselves for, what the forecasters said, would be a wet Sunday. It also gave me a chance to talk to Martin and some of his fellow countrymen, to find out more about the Wanderer. I also had a good chat with spritely 88-year-old Tony Brazier, from Ipswich, who was over with his New Imp.

The forecast was right and waterproofs were the garment of choice for Sunday morning. As the 180 bikes set off at intervals they were roundly cheered; in fact, the longer it took a bike to start, the louder the cheers. By the time the last rider left, it was time for lunch, bread, cheese and sausage from the nearby store, washed down with the local brew.

5 Fore-and-aft Victoria flat twin is something quite spectacular.

6 It says New Imperial on the engine but the motorcycle is actually a Diamant.

7 From 1929, a British JAP-powered, German-made Ardie.

8 The diminutive 1922 Z-22 Zundapp.

9 One of the more modern machines, a 1938 Puch 350GS.

The first motorcycles back woke me from my post lunch slumber. It was still raining and a bunch of wet riders returned from another 100km, this time taking in the shore of the River Elbe. They were all smiling, probably because they could soon get into some dry clothes.

Heinz Kindler presided over the prize-giving with short bursts of English, while I sampled the applekake, which rounded off a very good weekend

For those on a longer trip, a boat trip to Hamburg had been arranged for Monday – another indication of a well organised event. Alas, my Tuesday boat beckoned, but I took the long way home to cross the 20 miles Afsulitdijk in northern Holland, a 1930s engineering feat to tame the sea. In fact, when I stopped for a brew after leaving it, I was 25ft below sea level.

Post visit, I am now a bit further forward with my Wanderer, so the 1500-mile trip was worth it, as was seeing a 'foreign' rally and my quest now is to take the Wanderer to the 10th "North German" as an entrant.

End



10 The name – as seen on the footboard – looks tricky to pronounce, but the Blackburne motor is more familiar.

11 Vic Blake from Wokingham's lovely Raleigh.



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C.1928 HENDERSON 1,301CC DELUXE FOUR
£24,000 - 28,000



1946 HARLEY-DAVIDSON 74CI FL 'KNUCKLEHEAD'
£20,000 - 25,000

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Triumphant return

On August 15-16, sprinting returned to east Kent, as Ramsgate reverberated to the sound of racing.

Words: ALAN TURNER **Photography:** ALAN TURNER & CAROL GREEN

Government Acre is a large flat grass area at the top of the Western Cliff at Ramsgate, at the eastern end of Kent. Used occasionally as a venue for classic vehicle events, it provides a commanding view of the Undercliff, the esplanade road that was one of the country's top sprint venues in the 1950s and 60s. Many of the most famous names in straight line sport, and often some from other disciplines, could be seen keeping the throttle pinned while aiming the bike between cliffside and seashore. By the 70s, sprints were held at less-daunting locations and the Undercliff became an access road for traffic to Port Ramsgate.

Attending the classic events, Tim Hart looked down from the clifftop and its reminder of past glories. With the ferry terminal seldom used, he approached the local authorities to see if it was possible to run an event on the Undercliff that might re-capture the spirit of those sprint events, which coincided with the times when Ramsgate was a busy seaside resort. Having got the green light, it took more than a year to get everything organised.

Tim's learning curve was steep but, as progress was made, the project gathered support. Phil Spain proved to be a staunch right-hand man and the Invicta and East Kent Classic Motorcycle Clubs were among other clubs and organisations that also provided help. When the combined efforts came to fruition in mid-August, it all formed an impressive show on Government Acre. Local dealers had come on board with trade stands and Messhams Wall of Death proved a popular attraction. There was a funfair and a stage for live music, successfully spreading the Revival appeal beyond the two-wheel fraternity. Jim Redman was guest of honour and he gave a talk at one of the Ramsgate pubs on the preceding Friday evening.



Above: Riders awaiting their turn.

RIght: Guest of honour Jim Redman flags away Bill Mace on a 1921 Sunbeam Sprint to start the sprint revival.

Below: Nigel Mace gets off the line on his 1924 Sunbeam TT Model 9.



The course for the revival's demonstration sprint was shorter than the original quarter-mile, when much of it was a blind curve around the foot of the cliffs. The years have also seen a remarkable proliferation of street furniture, all of which had to be protected with tyres and straw bales.

With a measure of tolerance, the entry was period-correct and had attracted quite a few bikes that had been ridden at Ramsgate as well as riders who were also reacquainting themselves with the place. While sprints are more usually held on wide-open





aerodromes, witnessed by a handful of spectators, Ramsgate offered the equivalent of an enormous grandstand to accommodate everyone who wondered what it was all about. There were hundreds of onlookers lining every vantage point on the cliff-face steps and footpaths. With a nice touch of authenticity, as a demonstration the bikes did not have to conform to noise regulations.

As the first rider out, William Mace was enthusiastically flagged away by Jim Redman. William was riding a Sunbeam, appropriately a Sprint model of 1921 vintage, the oldest bike in the event, but still used in competition. Many of the varied entry that soon followed had interesting histories. Sheelagh Neal was piloting the Scott outfit on which she once rode passenger to Ramsgate regular, her father, Ossie. Unfortunately, gearbox problems soon sidelined the bike so Sheelagh reverted to the family's Triumph Tiger 70. Chris Illman was out with the 1927 Bayley-Cole Douglas. The bike was regularly entered at Ramsgate and in the hands of various eminent riders it was very successful, apparently holding some records in perpetuity.

Another former winning machine was Roger Pailes' bike, but that was when an AJS 7R engine lived where a Triumph twin currently resides. Many years before, Derek Dunk had claimed a class win on his Norton 99 Dominator and never thought he would be returning to Ramsgate, this time on a Norton 650SS. Another with Ramsgate history was Yellow Peril, the bike with the striking proboscis fairing created and raced by Bill Bragg. Some hurried remedial work in the paddock enabled the bike to run with Dave Woodard earning enormous applause, even though he was obliged to make his return on the breakdown truck.





Top left: Peter Allan's Tiger 100 has been ridden successfully at Bonneville. It is a copy of a bike that became a local legend in America, ridden by Bobby Sirkegian, son of a Triumph dealer.

Top right: Watched by some of the huge crowd, John Langridge is flagged away on his Norton Dominator.

Above left: Chris Illman demonstrates why the Bayley-Cole Douglas was so successful in its Ramsgate heyday.

Above right: Tim Kingham is justifiably proud of his Grey Flash replica, based on a Comet with the right bits and paint scheme.

T



Other famous Ramsgate bikes included Methamon, the Maurice Brierley Vincent sidecar outfit and, 'Thor', the former Francis Williams 1000cc Norton-JAP ridden by Ernie Woods, both on static display in the paddock.

Three sprint sessions were programmed for both days of the meeting. After making their runs, the bikes were escorted back to the paddock area, greeted with spontaneous applause. In turn, this was acknowledged by the riders and by the end of the second day's sessions, this became a ritual with the volume of applause apparently varying with the entertainment value of the just-witnessed run.

The original Ramsgate Sprint was organised by the Sunbeam Motor Cycle Club, but as the club is no longer involved in competition the Vintage MCC Sprint Section provided the necessary expertise for the demonstration. However, the Sunbeam club was still keen to be involved. Club chairman, Baz Staple, took part with a Velocette KSS, a 1928 model that was only a little older than its rider. Julie Diplock and Richard Bailey shared a Rudge and a Sunbeam Model 9. On Government Acre, the club's marquee attracted a lot of interest.

Near-perfect weather helped make the Revival a spectacular success. At 1pm on Sunday the focus was on the Undercliff. All the sprint bikes were lined up, facing out to sea, exhausts towards the cliff, and the engines were revved up in an aural celebration. Ramsgate was emphatically back!

End



Dutch delight

The 16th Anglo-Dutch Trial brought together a host of veteran machinery for four days of historic riding.

Words and photography: PHILLIP TOOTH

When members of the Netherlands Motorcycle Club visited the Isle of Man for the 1911 Tourist Trophy they came up with the idea of an international contest between them and the Brits. The rules were simple: each country would field 18 riders – two teams of nine private owners and nine factory riders – and their motorcycles had to be genuine touring machines equipped for the road. The first Anglo-Dutch took place in Holland in August 1912. Fortunately for the Dutch, national teams didn't have to use bikes made in the home country and although they entered three Eysink and two Vulkaan singles, they went to Germany for NSU motorcycles and Phanomobile three-wheelers, America for an Indian V-twin and Belgium for an FN single and a four.

There were 21 Brit-made motorcycles entered, including a trusty Triumph, a privately entered Bradbury, and a couple of Premiers. All machines carried a circular green numberplate, with E for England or H for Holland before the number. Each team was divided into three lightweights, three middleweights and three heavyweights, with or without a sidecar. And they had to average 30kmh (20mph) for each leg of the trial.





With no famous test hills such as Applecross, Sun Rising or Birdlip to climb, the British trade team expected the trial to be as tough as a stroll through the tulip fields. Top riders like Pa Applebee and Billy Pratt were used to being timed to fractions of a second, but the Dutch were more laid back even in the days before alternative 'coffee houses' and gave everyone 15-minute's latitude at all checkpoints.

If the Brits were counting on an away win they were to be sorely disappointed. Private owner F C Wasley missed a checkpoint when the magneto of his 350cc Douglas packed up, and lost a whopping 43 marks. The Dutch won the contest with 28 marks dropped compared with 63 for the Brits.

The Brits triumphed in the return match in 1913, when the route included a trip to Brooklands, but an assassin's bullet in Sarajevo ended any chance of an Anglo-Dutch Trial for 1914.

Decades later a group of VMCC and Holland's Veteraan Motoren Club members brought the Anglo-Dutch back to life in 1989 and it's been repeated on alternate years ever since. As we rolled off the ferry at the Hook of Holland for the 16th the score stood at six wins for the Dutch, and nine for the Brits. Are the Hollanders hungry enough to win in 2015?

1 Hennie Van Maarseveen, on her Triumph, beneath the big Dutch sky.

2 Welshman, Bill Phelps, has starting his 1908 clutchless Triumph down to a fine art – four steps and away.

3 One of the female participants, Carolien de Boer, with the two-speed 1913 BSA.

4 Lex Biermans was his 1903 Sommaire. The single-speeder was the joint second-oldest machine present.





Day One

I'm riding a 1913 Rex and sidecar that belongs to my Dutch friend Roel van Maarseveen. He's recently fitted a rebuilt ROC two-speed hub gear and band clutch, and warns me that it might need some adjustment. It's a handsome machine, but starting the 1000cc V-twin when it's cold takes a lot of effort. Turning the cranking handle – yes, this is a hand-start motorcycle – is like trying to stir a bucket of cement with a wooden spoon, but I eventually get the flywheels spinning fast enough to drop the valve lifter and it fires up. There's a rocking pedal on the left side – push and hold the front down to select first gear, and as soon as you reach a brisk walking place press the rear of the pedal down to lock the ROC hub in second.

With Bruce Hazelgrove acting as ballast in the sidecar we set off from the hotel at Almen, a quiet village mid-way between Apeldoorn and the German border. We're last away, and within a couple of miles it becomes obvious that the clutch is slipping. We pull over, get out the spanners, and adjust the clutch band – there are two on the hub, the second one is the brake. Another short ride and we stop again to adjust the gear selection mechanism. That's sorted it – the Rex is now flying along but we've lost a lot of time so we miss the morning route and join the other 47 riders at the lunch stop – a classic Ford car museum in Beekbergen. The afternoon trip takes us back over the River IJssel. Today's 120km (75 miles) route is a social run, so it doesn't matter that riders lose time waiting for the ferry. We catch up with Sunbeam rider Johnny Johnson and Ronald Branse, whose 1914 Bradbury V-twin and sidecar cruises effortlessly at 65kmh (40mph). Mike Wills also joins us – he's been riding his 1904 Bradbury for most of his adult life. Back at the hotel there's plenty of time to check the Rex over before having a glass of Grolsch. Or three.



5 Tooth and Hazelgrove, with the powerful Rex V-twin.

6 Rover power, and a three-speed gearbox, for Peter Haanen.

7 Ruud van Bijnen with his 198cc Centaur Lightweight, from 1911.

8 Hartlepool's Bobby Robinson pushes the BSA away after having to lock it in top gear and ride it as a single-speeder...

Day Two

The weather forecast promises another dry day, but by mid-morning the sky is black and lightning streaks across the sky. We're going to get wet – don't you just hate it when the forecasters get it wrong?

Our 125km (78 miles) route takes us north-east towards Mallum and on to Haaksbergen. We have dried out by the time we get to the historic railway station where the Dutch organisers have arranged for us to have lunch. And we do it in style – sitting in a carriage as the steam locomotive takes us on a return trip to Boekelo.

If you think that starting a clutchless single-speeder is hard, take a lesson from Bill Phelps. He can fire up his 1908 Triumph after pushing it for only four brisk steps before he drops the valve lifter and swings into the saddle. And he's got a Mills and Fulford sidecar hitched to the Triumph... with wife Jean sitting in it comfortably. "Gears are just a passing fad," says the Welshman.







Dennis Beale is also riding a Rex V-twin, but his a belt-drive single-speed Tourist model. "My bike is also difficult to start when it's cold," admits Dennis at another coffee stop. "But it's a lot easier to spin it over if I run some petrol through the priming taps in the cylinder head to dilute the oil." My Rex hasn't got priming taps. But I'll have bigger biceps by the end of the week.

The road that leads us to Diepenheim rises 2.5m in 300. Is this the famous Koeien Vlaai hillclimb that the Dutch told us about? Roel's Rex romps up the gentle incline and we head back to the hotel where we catch up with Mike Wills. He won't be riding his Bradbury tomorrow – the steering felt a bit vague when he was bouncing across a road that might have been designed to test a Citroen 2CV. "I thought I had a slow puncture," he explains. "But the steering stem has broken. I'm borrowing a belt-drive Triumph for the rest of the Anglo-Dutch."

Day Three

This is what we're here for – the one-day time trial that will decide who wins the 16th Anglo-Dutch. Competitors come to the line with a cold engine and have to ride 100m within one minute of their start time or they get penalty points. My arms are a blur as I stir my cement bucket, but the Rex fires and we're off again.

There are no route cards. Instead the Dutch use orange markers positioned 50m from junctions – a triangle for straight ahead, a square for a left turn and a circle for a right. There's also a triangle positioned 50m after a junction, like a child's security blanket for riders who worry that they might have made a mistake. It's a great system, and we're making good time.

It's a pleasure to watch Carolien de Boer start her 1913 two-speed BSA at a control point. A light tickle of the carburettor, set the ignition and throttle, and one kick. The 500cc single fires up first time, every time. Hennie van Maarseveen, another of the Dutch women, glides along majestically on her 1910 single-speed Triumph. She's on her way to an award for the best female rider, with only three points lost. Brit Bobby Robinson isn't so lucky – he's having trouble with the gearbox on his 1914 three-speed BSA. He has to lock it in top gear and bump-start the 557cc single.

Don't you just hate it when the weather forecasters get it right? Bang on time the storm clouds dump a monsoon on our little patch of the Netherlands and we decide to stay at the coffee stop for a little longer until the rain eases. We lose more time when a dairy farmer closes the road so that he can take his cows for milking.

9 Gert Holmersma with his awesome 1000cc V-twin Indian. There was an Indian V-twin in the inaugural 1912 event, too.

There must be a hundred Holstein Friesians, and they are in no hurry. But someone up there must like old bike riders, because by the time we reach the lunch stop at The Sun in Wehl the sun really is shining.

It doesn't last – half-way through the afternoon route we turn into the monsoon again but 30km further and we've got blue skies when we reach the final checkpoint. Lex Biermans is looking very pleased with himself but it's not because he kept dry inside his sailing gear. "I put a band of inner tube rubber over the drive pulley on my 350cc Sommaire," he says. "My flat belt didn't slip at all in the rain!"





10



11

Day Four

The competition is over, but there's another 125km (78 miles) ahead of us. We're riding south-east to Ruurlo before stopping at a saw mill near Groenlo. The steam engine that powers the saws was built in Monchengladbach, Germany in 1897 and got almost as many admiring glances as Peter Haanen's original-paint Rover – although when it comes to original finish, passenger Bruce prefers Ruud van Bijnen's 198cc Centaur Featherweight. "The exhaust is so quiet," he says. "It sounds like a kitten sneezing!"

The more that I ride the Rex the better it gets and the final 50km (31 miles) to the finish fly by. After the evening dinner organiser Fred Hesselink announces the results. He tries to let the Anglos down gently, but you can't hide the truth. "The visitors have scored 97 penalty points," he says. "But the Dutch have done a little better – only 36 points lost!" We've been thrashed. Dennis Beale winks at me. "We'll beat them in 2017," he says with a grin. "There are lots of good hills in England!" End

10 Single-speed Excelsior, of 475cc and dating to 1903, with Roel Van Maarseveen in the saddle.

11 Harry de Boer with his brilliant Williamson, and Brit Dave Miller with his equally awesome Triumph-JAP.

12 Ronald Branse, Bradbury V-twin, Johnny Johnson, 1914 Sunbeam, and Mike Wills, 1904 Bradbury.



12

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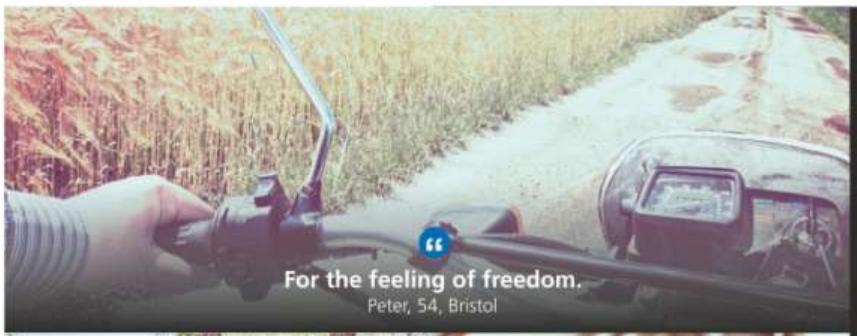
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GOLD STANDARD?

'The Italian Gold Star' is what they always say about the Gilera Saturno and in many ways that's a fair comment. But the Gilera may be easier to live with.

Words: JAMES ROBINSON **Photography:** GARY CHAPMAN



There is no other way than to say it – I was really excited about riding a Gilera Saturno. I've never ridden one before and was fascinated to discover if it really was Italy's answer to the Gold Star, and how the Italian take on the big single theme would compare with the offerings of Old Albion.

Big singles are traditionally the preserve of the British and the Italians. Though there were, of course, singles made in other countries, if we consider a one lunger then, in truth, it's normally a British machine that comes to mind, though I suppose the parallel twin and the screaming multi (or the exquisite tiddler) could make claims for being the 'national machine' of the UK and Italy respectively. So if a big single isn't the quintessential national machine of each country, both nations have a long and proud history of making such machines.

And if the BSA Gold Star is Britain's single of choice, then the Gilera Saturno is Italy's version. Though this is a rather hackneyed and tired phrase, the thing is the comparison fits so well, it is hard to ignore. Both were designed before the Second World War and were

the respective marque's pre-Second World War range topper (the Goldie for 1938, the Saturno at the Milan Show of 1940) though it was postwar when the majority were produced.

Very few Saturnos were built prewar; by comparison, the prewar version followed the 'four bolt' and 'eight bolt' (Otto Bulloni) models used in the sporting arena – indeed, an example of the latter was winner of the 1939 Milano-Taranto, then one of Italy's most prestigious, high-profile road races; Italian road races of the period were just that, conducted on open roads, which would be lined with spectators, while the 'course' would also go through villages and towns. Hairy stuff.

The new Saturno was designed by Giuseppe Salmaggi, an Italian who'd previously worked for the Belgian Sarolea concern. The name Saturno went with the then current planetary canon at Gilera; others included Mars and Uranus.

A road-going machine, there wasn't anything revolutionary about the Saturno; it was more revolutionary, than 'all change.' Its principal advantages over the Eight Bolt VTE was that it was lighter and more compact, though there wasn't anything too complicated or clever – rather than go down the overhead camshaft route of say Norton or Velocette, or the multi-valve route of perhaps Rudge, it was a simple two-valve pushrod engine; just like the Gold Star in fact.

The new Gilera featured unit construction and there was a concerted effort to keep it clean and modern looking; the oil-carrying wet-sump ensured there was no need for any external oil pipes whatsoever, which added to the appearance of lightness and modernity. Another bonus of the engine's design (which reportedly took Salmaggi two years of work) was that it could be dissembled in its entirety, save the removal of the crankshaft, with the engine left in the frame.

There was rear springing from the outset, too. Though Gilera had earlier experimented with a cantilever arrangement at the rear, the system used on the Saturno was actually pioneered on the VTN/VTE series that preceded it, and was designed by Giuseppe Gilera in 1934. Basically, the rear springs were fitted horizontally alongside the rear wheel, above the pivoted fork which was attached to the spring boxes with friction dampers either side.





Above: Engine and gearbox unit sets the Gilera part from the British offerings.

Right: Beautiful attention to detail abounds.

Below: left There's a ferocious bark from that so-called silencer.

Bottom left: Oil-carrying sump another of the Gilera's features.

Below: Single carburettor isn't inordinately oversize for a 'sport' model.

Bottom: Lights were standard on Sport models; racers went for the Sanremo or later Piuma.









At the front, there were the standard girder forks, while despite having rear springing the rest of the frame was a standard 'open' type.

From the start, there was a 'competition' version of the model, and talented, tiny racer and development rider Massimo Masserini was engaged to prove its capability, on the way racking up several wins, the most noteworthy and impressive being a debut success in the 1940 Targa Florio event in Palermo, Sicily (incidentally the last time motorcycles were in the event) as well as several other 'second tier' events held at Modena. But the model didn't go into full production, 'a few' being offered in the spring of 1940 but these were mainly Saturno Sports built to competition (Tipo Competizione) specification though retaining lights, so intended for the long races. The machine Masserini campaigned was reckoned to actually be the prototype. Interestingly, the Competizione models had a 5:8 to 1 compression ratio, against the Sport's 6 to 1, though 32bhp was claimed for the racer, 10bhp less for the Sport.

War brought a halt to such frivolity, with minuscule numbers built (one report reckoned five!) and production was switched to churning out sidevalves. Though there was a military Saturno, that was to come later; machines during the war were the LTE 500, a weighty plodder with just 10bhp on tap, but capable of carrying two fully laden soldiers and towing a sidecar, supposedly the same requirements as the Italian allied German's demanded.

Postwar, and the Saturno was the undisputed range leader for Gilera, with full-scale production launched



in 1947. Compared with the lithe (and scarce) prewar jobs, these machines – offered in Sport and Turismo guises – looked somewhat bulky, with a chrome and red petrol tank not helping the optical illusion. All these postwar Saturnos were fitted with girder forks, though the Competizione of 1947 gained blade forks – a win in San Remo by Carlos Bandirola earned it a name, too, though it is generally written as Sanremo. Though the Gilera factory had concentrated on a supercharged multi prewar, the postwar ban on forced induction meant a hasty rethink and suddenly the Saturno-based racer was important again. Indeed the new forks and full-width front hub were straight off the blown four.

The Sport immediately became the most popular option; between 1947 and 1950, the peak years of Saturno production, 900 Turismo and 2700 Sport models were made. The main difference between the two was the Sport featured an alloy head, with an iron head on the Turismo. It was claimed a Turismo would do 75mph, a Sport 85. In 1950, the Turismo was dropped from the range, while the girder forks were replaced by Gilera's own telescopic set-up and full-width hubs while the rear suspension became much more conventional in 1952 as well, as well as looking much neater and again making the Saturno look modern. Oil capacity was increased as well, plus there was a claimed hike in power, but top speed improvement was negligible.

And that pretty much takes us to the subject machine, a 1955 example. Fitted with lovely Borrani rims, it was imported into the UK by North Leicester Motorcycles (01530 263381), and wears an age-related





Top: North Leicester Motorcycle's Chris Meyhew has a canter on the Saturno.

Above: Lovely headstock transfer.

Above right: All Italian makers were proud of their products and honoured to put their name to them.

plate. I noticed immediately that the valve lifter wasn't connected asked NLM's Chris Mayhew about it.

"You won't need it," he reassured me, and just to prove the point, demonstrated. A good prod and the Saturno barked into life; and it really does bark. Still, you'd not fancy trying to start a Gold Star without a valve lifter – or simply, you wouldn't start a Goldie without a valve lifter. Soon, the handsome Gilera settled down to a steady tickover, the engine thumping away with the bike on its stand, while I kitted up.

I hopped on and rolled the Gilera forward off its stand. Handlebars felt narrow, was the first thing I noticed, while the lever span seemed quite generous. Footrest are quite a long way forward and high, I felt, which all attributed to a feeling of sitting on the Gilera, rather than in it.

First gear – one down on the front part of the heel-and-toe lever – engaged cleanly, and with a few revs

(though the soundtrack was suggestive of starting a GP!) we were away. Up through the gearbox, using the front part of the lever in the conventional manner, rather than 'heeling' it through, was all smooth and pleasant, and top gear was engaged before we were even out of the speed limit.

Braking was as good as anything contemporary, while the engine felt smooth and strong. Handling seemed lovely as well, with the whole package feeling much more civilised than the initial noise and the Sport tag might suggest.

The Gilera seemed to be really torquey, while the suspension was comfortable and pliant. I found myself perched a little between the saddle and bum/pillion pad, which meant that carrying a passenger might be a snug affair, while the high footrests pushed my knees above the level of the tank; I have become used to gripping the tank with my knees on some bikes and on particularly bumpy roads, and I'm not quite sure I'd be able to on the Gilera.

Soon, I was tipping the Gilera into corners happily and confidently, it holding its line impeccably and going where it was pointed. We were in no way pushing on, and the Gilera felt right at home. A ride on some nice, quiet back roads doesn't really inform too much about a motorcycle's performance – but a photographic session does. Start, up the gears, round a corner, brake, change down, turn in the road and repeat half a dozen times, is a much better learning experience than 20 miles on a back road in top gear. The nicely balanced Gilera was happy to comply and I was comfortable turning it in a tight arc, feet up. It is possessed of a lovely balanced feel, while the clutch stood the abuse without complaint too.

So how does the riding experience compare with a Gold Star? And did it live up to expectations? Well, despite the Saturno Sport sounding like a rorty racer, a DBD Goldie is quicker, as is a Venom, but then they are newer. To keep with the Velocette analogy I'd say the performance of the Saturno was more on a par with a 1950s MSS, so in the Matchless G80/Norton ES2/BSA B33, even Vincent Comet, league. Which has led me to



thinking that rather than being the 'Italian Gold Star' the Saturno could better be described as the 'Italian International Norton' as that is nearer to where the performance of this 1955 Saturno, in this state of tune, is. Of course, this is the only Saturno I've ridden so maybe others are in a higher state of tune and so be more Goldie-like in their performance. But saying that, with its ease of starting and practical nature, the Gilera rider will have started his mount and perhaps got there before the Goldie bursts into life...

None of that should be taken to say the Saturno failed to live up to expectations or that I didn't enjoy it – I absolutely did, I thought it was lovely and would happily have it in my shed. It would be great on British back roads and would be, for example, a pleasure on the Irish rally, as its torquey nature, compliant suspension, good brakes and ease of starting would suit the event wonderfully. For the sort of riding many of us do, on quiet country lanes, the Saturno would make more sense, certainly more so than a Clubman's DBD34. End



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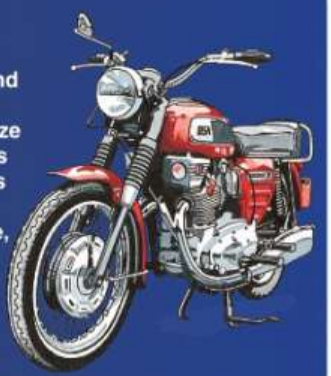
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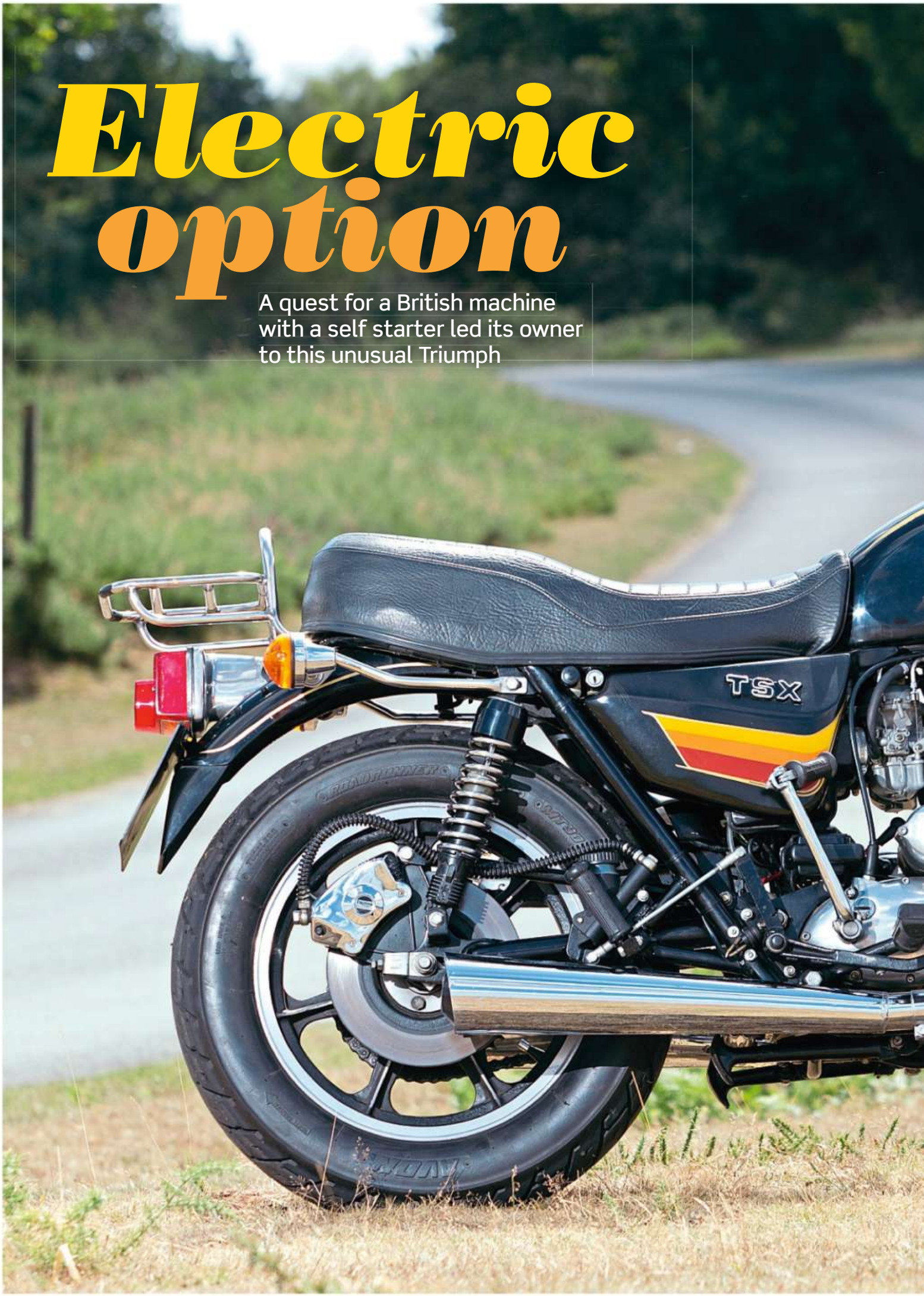
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Kawasaki YAMAHA ROYAL ENFIELD BSA
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Electric option

A quest for a British machine with a self starter led its owner to this unusual Triumph



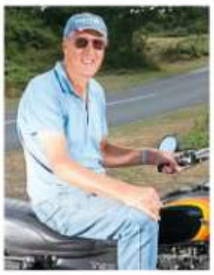

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For years my pal Brian Jeffery accepted the conventional view that classic motorcycles (like his Norton ES2 featured in *TCM* August 2008) had to be kick-started, while modern ones had electric starters. But then he became the delighted owner of a modern Hinckley Triumph, and realised it was possible to combine classic looks with modern convenience, so he set out to buy a machine that did just that. A brief flirtation with a VMCC-eligible Honda confirmed the benefit of an electric boot, but Brian really wanted something made in this country, and soon discovered the choices were, to put it mildly, somewhat limited.

There were a few lightweights powered by Villiers twins with Dynastarts, but it wasn't easy to find either them or any owners who could vouch for their effectiveness, and much the same could be said of the 400cc Norton Electra. In any case, none of those bikes was really up to the task of carrying six foot-plus Brian and his wife Brenda. Commandos and Tridents could easily carry two, of course, and some later models had starters, but their owners only seemed to use them when the engines were warm enough to fire up easily. Effective modern starters could also be retro-fitted to a few machines, but Brian didn't really want to buy a bike and immediately start modifying it, so he was stumped until he discovered the existence of one of the rarest variations on the Triumph Bonneville theme.

There isn't room here to go into the tangled history of the Triumph Cooperative's lock-in, bail-out, in-fighting and eventual demise, but the simple fact is that throughout all that mayhem, the venerable Bonneville remained in production and was steadily developed. Its primary market was always America, and American influences and requirements were responsible for many of the developments, including the gradual transition from a rorty-torty 650cc cafe racer to a mild-mannered 750cc tourer. And once you accept a motorcycle has become more civilised, it becomes logical to stop ruining your best loafers on a kick-start pedal. That was the logic with Commandos and Tridents, which had similarly grown bigger and softer, but when Meriden finally got round to fitting an electric starter to the Bonneville they had a bit more experience to guide them. The starter was the same as used on the Reliant three-wheeler, so it had a proven track record, the battery capacity and alternator output were both boosted, and everything was helped along by the Lucas Rita electronic ignition which had already been adopted.





Owner Brian Jeffery appreciates the usefulness of an electric start on his Triumph.



'Pleasingly smooth' is how the feel can be described.

The first electric-start model – the ES Electro – became available in 1980, and although condemned by many as either too soft to be a proper Bonneville, or too old-fashioned to be worth updating, actually sold quite well; with several variants being listed alongside the kick-start models until the eventual liquidation of the Meriden Cooperative at the end of 1982. Other electric-start models included the Executive – ready fitted with hard luggage and a rather inelegant handlebar fairing – the limited-edition Royal Wedding variant with its special paint job, and, lastly, the TSX featured here.

The background to the TSX shows both the American influence, and a welcome preparedness to go along with it. Feedback from the USA indicated that cruiser styling was what bikers were going for, and in 1980 the factory displayed a prototype 'low-rider' called the Phoenix at the Earls Court show. It never reached production, but the idea wasn't abandoned and Meriden subsequently adopted a design proposed by Triumph Motorcycles of America. TMA's president, Wayne Moulton, is credited with the design – although it's been suggested that he leant heavily on previous work by Pennsylvania Triumph dealer John Monaco – and only diehard cafe racer types would deny the resultant TSX was an extremely successful demonstration of fine tuning an existing motorcycle to meet market requirements.

The electric-start motor was a standard fitting (with a kick-start available as an optional extra) and the frame was lowered through subtle modifications such as repositioning the bottom rear suspension mount. Less







Above: The TSX sold in only limited numbers, though it was a capable machine all round.

Left: Rev-counter and speedo comprise the dashboard.

Right: Though it is now in unit with a five-speed gearbox and of 750cc, the lineage of the 1930s Speed Twin is still clear to see.

Below: 'Tire' spelling proves where the intended market was.



subtly, a 16in rear wheel was adopted with a broader tyre, a detail requiring a wider swinging fork and a slight off-set for the engine. Cosmetically, there were shortened mudguards at both ends; the rear one having a plastic extension to match the size of British numberplates, and presumably discarded by most American customers. There was chrome on the passenger's grab rail and the brake caliper covers to add a bit of bling, and the special exhaust had fatter pipes and megaphone-styled 'mufflers' with the balance pipe (needed to meet US noise regulations) fitted unobtrusively between them rather than in its usual prominent position on the pipes. The small-capacity petrol tank was non-standard, too, with a central filler cap and a single tap moved forwards to accommodate the bulky constant-velocity carburettors. The TSX was available in black or red, both having yellow and orange flashes on the petrol tank and similar colours and patterns on plastic side panels shaped to match the new frame layout. Smart seven-spoked cast-aluminium wheels completed the picture. Interestingly, the frame-lowering efforts were virtually cancelled out by the fatter tyre and a deeper stepped dualseat, so the riding position was little different to any other late-model Bonneville; a fact that welcomed by long-legged riders such as Brian Jeffery.

The items were obvious enough individually, but the overall package must have involved Triumph and its suppliers in quite a bit of work and expense. Shortening the rear 'fender', for instance, meant that the rear light body had to be mounted higher up, so a new unit was required to restore its horizontal top line. That, incidentally, meant that a standard Bonneville carrier wouldn't fit a TSX because its cross-tube didn't match the cut-out in the aluminium casting. After a false start with suppliers who were ignorant of this fact, Brian had one made in stainless steel by Classic Racks (07742 611811) to match the grab rail's mounting points, and the design has been added to CR's list for the benefit of other TSX owners.

Not that there are many other TSX owners, especially in this country. The model was only in production from June 1981 until December 1982, and less than 400 were made. The majority went to America – as intended – with smaller numbers either staying at home or exported elsewhere. Red models outsold black ones by a ratio of



Above: There's a single Lockheed disc at the rear.

Below: Single front disc brake is well up to the Triumph's performance.





Neutral and reassuring cornering is another admirable quality of the Triumph.

"What a pity this couldn't have been made a decade or more earlier."

two to one. Naturally the gear lever was on the left as standard, but a right-foot shift was theoretically available for die-hard Brits.

That doesn't apply to Brian's bike, which was an American export model seemingly repatriated in 2006, that he bought from Cosmo Classic Motorcycles (01424 437719) whose proprietor, Evan Cosmos, specialises in semi-exotica like this and the Craig Vetter-styled Triumph Hurricane. "The starter motor's been up-rated," Evan told him, although the improvements were evidently internal as Brian found the casing date-stamped 1982 when he was investigating the only starting trouble he's had so far. The fault was actually down to a broken contact in the starter solenoid; and when Brian discovered this was the inexpensive type originally specified for the BMC Mini, he decided it was simpler to replace it than attempt a repair.



Relatively plush dual seat provides a comfortable ride.



Twin Bing carburettors take care of the fuelling.

The engine certainly starts on the button now, and almost immediately settles down to a reliable tickover. It wouldn't be a Triumph if first gear engaged silently, but it goes in easily and thereafter changes are as quick and precise as you like, aided by a light and positive clutch. Some pundits have claimed the handling of the TSX is too 'chopper-like', but I find it goes round corners smoothly with a pleasantly neutral feel. The brakes are powerful by classic standards, and I certainly feel no need for the second front disc which was an optional extra. The engine deserves special mention because it's torquey enough to not need revving to more than half its theoretical maximum to obtain zestful acceleration or maintain main-road cruising speeds, and since the crankshaft of these late 750s received extra attention it's pleasantly smooth compared with previous members of the Bonneville family.

I hate having to write it yet again, but what a pity all this couldn't have been done a decade or more earlier. Surely a reasonably smooth, poky electric-start motor in a decent chassis with good brakes and smart looks would have sold by the thousand when the competition consisted mainly of complex and expensive foreigners. But I suppose if the TSX was twice as common it wouldn't be half as interesting, would it? End

FINER DETAILS
1982 TRIUMPH TSX

ENGINE TYPE
ohv parallel twin
CAPACITY
744cc
BORE X STROKE
76mm x 82mm
OUTPUT
48bhp @ 6500rpm
COMPRESSION RATIO
7.9:1
LUBRICATION
recirculating from oil-in-frame tank
CARBURETTOR
twin 32mm Bing Type 64
IGNITION
Lucas Rita electronic
GEARBOX
Triumph five-speed
FRAME
all-welded cradle
SUSPENSION
Triumph telescopic forks, rear swinging arm with Paioli units
TYRES
front 3.25x19in, rear 5.1x16in
BRAKES
10in Lockheed discs front and rear
TANK CAPACITY
2.8 gallons
EQUIPMENT
tachometer
SEAT HEIGHT
30in
WHEELBASE
56in
WEIGHT
415lb
TOP SPEED
100mph approx
FUEL CONSUMPTION
50mpg approx

Club contact:
Triumph Motorcycle Owners' Club, www.tomcc.org
Vintage Motor Cycle Club, National Secretary, Allen House, Wetmore Road, Burton-upon-Trent, Staffs, DE14 1TR.

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Celebratory times







It's July 3, 1975, and I'm excitedly loading the Craven panniers and top box on my then new GT750 Suzuki for my first trip to the continent on two wheels. My goal; Spa and the Belgian round of that year's world road-racing championships. Memories of that inaugural foreign soirée include a rough channel crossing, a heart-stopping tank slapper, when the big Kettle encountered its first grooved section of motorway, and the blood-curdling sounds of Read and Bonera on their screaming works MVs are ones that will live with me forever.

It was also a weekend when I caught an infectious bug for which there is no known cure; it's not one found in medical journals – or the dictionary – but I know it as 'travellitis'; a joy of heading for the next far-off horizon. In the ensuing 40 years I've been lucky enough to ride my bikes in and over four continents of the globe but I still get that old buzz of excitement when it's time to set off on another new adventure.

We now fast forward to July 2015 and although the Craven panniers have long been pensioned off the old top box is still giving sterling service and now sits proudly on the rack of another triple in the form of my Triumph 955 Sprint ST; our latest destination is Bardonecchia and the 50th Stella Alpina Rally. Mention the word 'rally' and most people immediately think of super-fit iron men (and women) hurtling at high speed across inhospitable terrain – or conversely a crowd of masochists camped on the side of a Welsh hillside in the middle of winter – but this is not what the Stella is all about.

From its outset in 1966 the two co-founders Harry W Louis (editor in chief of *The Motor Cycle*) and his Italian friend Mario Artusio were keen to promote the event (which has been held annually ever since) as a non-commercial, non-competitive, friendly get-together of enthusiasts whose common goal was the joy of motorcycling and the mountains. To check if this philosophy is still as prevalent today as it was 49 years ago (this makes the 2015 the 50th event) I donned my waterproofs and set off with my old friend Richard

Above: **All packed up and ready to leave.**

Below: **Mario Artusio is presented with a plaque by Roberto Borgis, mayor of Bardonecchia.**

Bottom: **Wally Cheshire and Richard Difazio.**

Inset: **A strip of film from Harry Louis' 1966 trip to the inaugural Stella Alpina.**









Above left: **Andy Westlake leans on the same top box he used for his first continental jaunt 40 years ago.**

Above: **Bultacos look just the job for mountain climbing.**

Difazio for the 70-mile ride to Portsmouth for the overnight crossing to Le Havre.

By keeping to our chosen route of the lightly trafficked D and N roads, Bardonecchia (which lies at the Italian end of the Frejus tunnel) is, via Val d'Isere and the Mont Cenis, a 675-mile ride from Le Havre and was reached after two-and-a-half fantastic days of motorcycling; France really is a heaven for two wheels. Many who attend the Stella choose to camp but for us it was the luxury of the Hotel Europa where we met up with the rally's co-founder Mario Artusio (Harry Louis died in 1988). Now in his 84th year, Mario has been present at every Stella since its conception although since 1994 the organisation has been in the very capable hands of his good friend, Alpine guide and ski instructor, Alberto Borello.

Mario takes up the story…

"I rode up until 1990, always on BMW machines on which I did a lot of kilometres exploring the mountains. Before the Second World War my father was a keen motorcyclist but when the war finished we had several years of rationing and commodities such as petrol and tyres were in short supply, so although he had a bike he couldn't ride it. When I started he gave up riding himself but would often come with me as a pillion.

"I began competing on a 50cc Motom in regularity trials which were held on ISDT lines and I became Moto club Torino champion three years on the trot (1950-1951-1952). The Motom was a lovely little bike and despite turning out less power than the works-prepared bikes and being slower on the uphill sections I was able to make up the lost time by going faster downhill.

"I loved riding in these type of events and from the Motom I progressed to a 98cc NSU Fox and then to a split-single 125cc two-stroke Puch which was very advanced for its time and featured an automatic oiling system. On the road I covered many thousands of kilometres on my three BMWs, which were a R51/3 with telescopic forks, R69S and finally a R90S that I bought in 1974 from my good friend Francesco Soffietti who owned the BMW bike agency in Turin."

Francesco was a great character who became the president of the BMW Club Torino and took part in the first Stella Alpina rally; he attended regularly up until 1988 when he died in his bed at the age of 76 after a stroke.

On his lapel Mario proudly wears a badge depicting a nine-cylinder BMW aero engine, which was presented to all members of the Society of Junkers pilots who served the beleaguered German eastern front troops during the Second World War. It was given to him by the friend of one of these pilots in recognition of his love of things BMW, and despite Mario's anti-fascist feelings it is one that he is proud to wear in recognition of

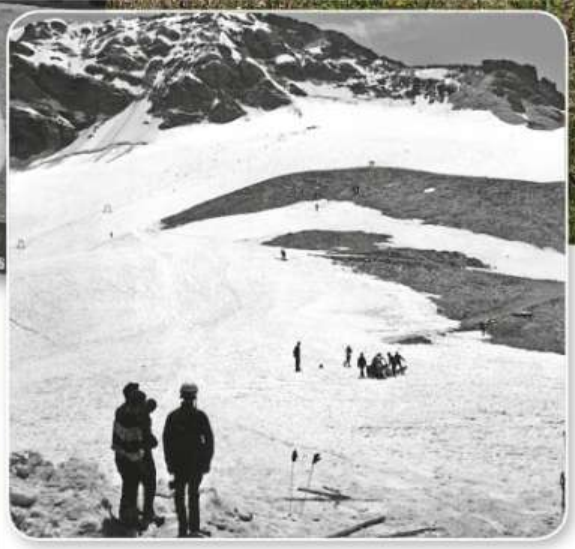


A 'recce' before the 1967 event. Francesco Soffietti is in the white overalls.



Well-used BMW and sidecar.





STELLA ALPINA 3009m INTERNAZIONALE

the universally harmonious rally that he helped initiate and actively promoted for the last 49 years. I asked Mario how he first met Harry Louis and how the idea of the rally came to them.

"I began learning English in the early 1950s but I wanted to know more of the technical side of the language so my father got me a subscription to *The Motor Cycle* which at the time was then a sort of motorcycling 'bible' for English-speaking riders all over the world.

"Harry loved touring in the high passes and wrote many articles about his travels that I read with much interest. After reading one I wrote to him to correct a point he made about the highest navigable pass in the Alps and invited him to come and explore some of the interesting dirt roads that we had here in Italy.

"Many of these unsealed tracks had been originally constructed by the Army but were by now largely neglected and unmarked on maps so Harry rode to Italy where he and I spent a week riding in the Piedmont Alps. We decided it would be great to share this wonderful scenery with likeminded souls so the idea of an international rally was born.

"In the mid-1960s everybody wanted a small car and the sales of motorcycles were incredibly low so we had no idea how many people, if any, might come. Other than the humble commuter machine you could go out all day and hardly see another big bike so for the first year we decided to hold the rally at the Bornio (1225m) and ride up to the Stelvio Pass (2757m) a distance of 22kms all on Tarmac; amazingly we had 200 motorcyclists from nine countries turn up. Thanks to Harry promoting the event through the pages of *The Motor Cycle,* 62 of these were from England and besides Harry, on a 650cc BSA A65, we had Jack Wiley (founder of the BMF) on a 250cc Ariel Leader and Helmut Dahne from Munich (BMW R69S) who later became famous with his prowess on the race tracks.

"Following this success the following year we decided to move it to the Colle Del Sommeiller, a 27km unsurfaced track that ran to an elevation of 3009 metres. It wasn't an easy ride but for those who reached the summit it offered breathtaking views of an Alpine environment totally free from any signs of commercialism."

In an era that is largely ruled by money and commercialism, Mario is justifiably proud that the rally's simple philosophies continue to draw people from all parts of the globe year after year. Its multinational appeal

Main: **Basecamp established.**

Right: **During the 1967 rally, 18-year-old Robert Gregory and pals heft his 350cc Matchless through the snow and above the 10,000ft line...**

Inset: **Harry's BSA twin is posed with Mario Artusio and his BMW in picture 25.**





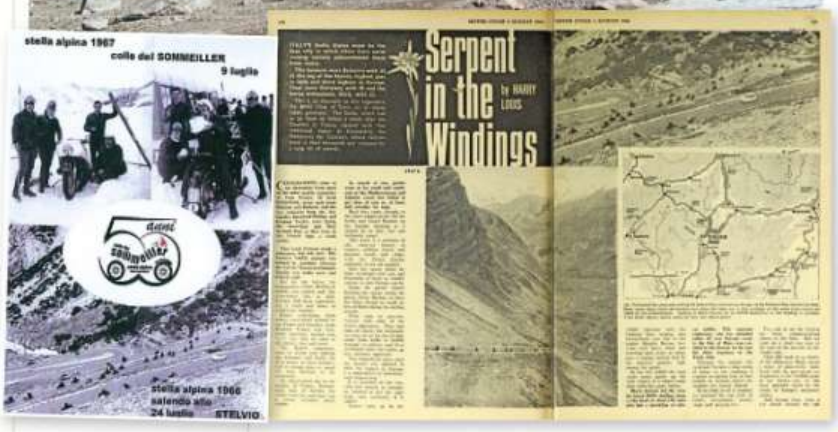
highlighted as Richard and I sat enjoying a beer and a pizza in the town's main square; a super vantage point where we witnessed bikes from 14 different nations pass by. On Saturday lunchtime we joined Alberto and Mario for a superb celebration lunch where the founder was presented with a pair of engraved plaques by the mayor of Bardonecchia, Roberto Borgis, and another from Vittorio Montabone to commemorate the Stella's half-century. Other Brits including CW Motorcycles joint founder, Wally Cheshire, were also on our table but sadly one notable absentee was Colin 'Codge' Hodge who was missing for what is believed to be only the third time since his first trip to the Piedmont Alps in 1968.

On the Sunday morning, with the sun up and not a cloud in the sky, it was an early breakfast and with the bikes stripped of their panniers we set off towards the Colle Del Sommeiller. By 9am there was already a steady stream of two and three wheelers wending their way up the sinuous track which, for the first couple of miles, is metalled until you reach a hamlet – little more than a couple of houses and a restaurant – called Rochemolles. This is the 'end of civilisation' and from here the gradient becomes steeper and the track rougher and is largely made up of sharp flinty stones. Numerous streams cross and re-cross the track and as we go higher the trees thin out and we're afforded wonderful vistas of the mountains. Many of the participants were mounted on modern 'adventure bikes' and lightweight enduros but don't think that you need an off-road bike to negotiate the track, as I saw everything from a full-dress Gold Wing, a 1950s Matchless single to a humble Suzuki A100 two stroke making their way ever upward towards the summit.

Organiser Alberto was up with the first rays of sunlight and had driven his truck to a high point just below the snow line where riders exchanged tales and bought their prized Stella Alpina badge. This is adorned with the little white flower that gives the rally its name prominent on its face, but sadly by the time the Triumph and I struggled to the summit they had all been sold and I had to add my name to the long list of rally participants who will have one posted to them later. When I once explained to a (non-motorcycling) friend what the rally was all about he listened intently and then paraphrased it to...

"So you're travelling all the way to Italy to ride up a rocky track to where the snow line is, buy a little badge and then turn around and ride all the way back home again?"

He had of course missed the whole point of the pleasure derived from travelling to the venue on two – or three – wheels and the addictive cocktail it becomes when mixed with wonderful scenery and good, like-minded company. Other rallies and gatherings have come and gone but the Stella has survived them all; and as the sun sets on the imposing mountains and we head for home I can report that Harry and Mario's dream is alive and well. Here's to the next 50! End



Top left: What we all came for. The queue to collect a badge.

Top right: Scenery is breathtaking.

Below: Riders' cavalcade during the 1967 event, ascending the Sommeiller track.

Above right: Report from the first rally, penned by Harry Louis.



Big thanks to Mario and to Alberto for their wonderful hospitality. Alberto informed me that 1500 motorcyclists attended this year. The Stella is always held over the second weekend in July and there is no pre booking or entry fee – you just turn up. Try it yourself next year, you won't be disappointed. From 'door to door' we covered 1425 trouble-free miles with the 955cc Triumph averaging a staggering 62.64mpg; Richard's 1987 R75BMW averaged 52.55mpg.

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Bob Mac strikes gold

After a recent run of back luck, Bob McIntyre got his Grand Prix season back on track with a stunning win in Belgium, with Mike Hailwood, Ernst Degner, Jim Redman and Florian Camathias also scooping up some big wins.

Words: MICHAEL BARRACLOUGH **Photography:** MORTONS MEDIA ARCHIVE

The threatening rainclouds that had lurked overhead during the previous week's Dutch GP at Assen followed the riders to Spa, but the welcome appearance of some sunnier weather was enough to dispel them. The weather going into this Belgian GP tussle was as fine as it was during TT week – good news for riders and spectators alike.

The 250cc race was arguably the most thrilling spectacle, culminating in a breath-taking final lap in which a reignited Bob McIntyre (Honda) duelled with Jim Redman (Honda), with the latter suffering a split fuel tank at Stavelot, which put an end to his race and guaranteed a fine victory for Bob Mac. The first couple of laps were fraught and many riders were forced to retire. Ernst Degner's Suzuki seized before the first lap had finished, and Ray Bogaerdt's Honda failed shortly after. Frank Perris clung to fourth position until halfway through the race, at which point his Suzuki gave up the ghost and he was forced to retire as well.

After the retirements the hierarchy was quickly established; McIntyre and Redman were neck-and-neck up front until Redman's petrol tank split and McIntyre was able to sail joyfully into the lead. The crowd cheered as McIntyre came screaming down from the final hairpin and passed the chequered flag.

The 500cc race was as many had come to expect – Mike Hailwood (MV Agusta) all the way. Mike the Bike and the MV Four

Straight from the plate

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Racer winner Bob McIntyre howls round the Spa circuit on his 250cc Honda four.


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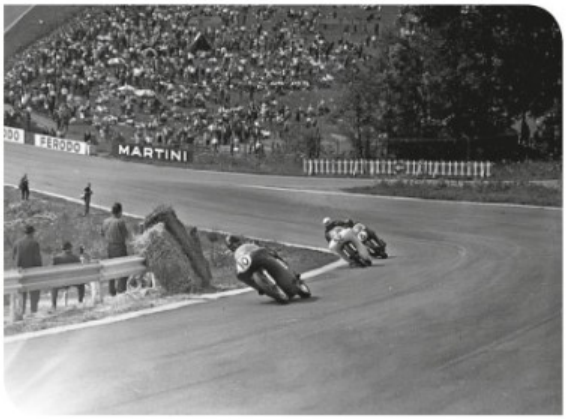


were too much for the rest of the field to contend with, and he racked up another victory without having to engage in too much jousting and jostling.

Florian Camathias – another man whose luck had suffered a blow in recent weeks – experienced a return to form with a stunning win in the sidecar race. His BMW never missed a beat, and he whizzed past Fritz Scheidegger and Max Deubel, both on BMW outfits, as if it was nothing. He even managed a new lap record for the race, running up a time of four minutes, 57.1 seconds at an average speed of 106.16mph.

Honda-mounted Luigi Taveri won the 125cc race (but only after a pitched battle with Jim Redman) and Ernst Degner (Suzuki) was the victor in the 50cc race, passing a brace of extremely nippy Kreidlers to claim the top spot.

For fans of Bob McIntyre, this Belgian GP victory will be tinged with melancholy. One month after his victory at Spa he tragically passed away following a serious crash at Oulton Park, in which he sustained serious head injuries. He died after nine days in hospital.





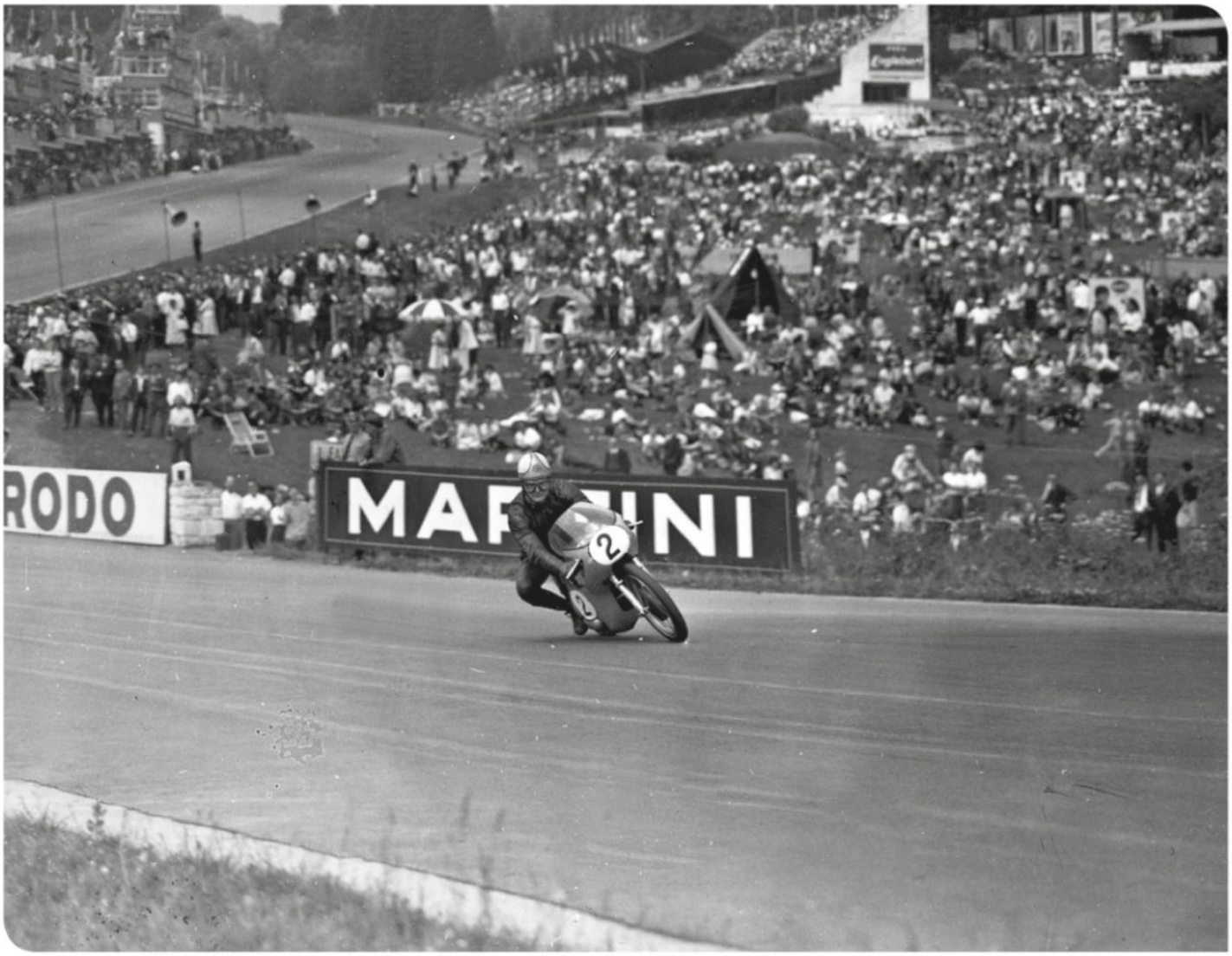
Left: Spectators crane their necks to get a better view.

Top: Tony Godfrey (Norton) leads Ron Langston (Norton) and Alan Shepherd (Matchless) in the 500cc race.

Above: Riders in the 125cc race jostle through Eau Rouge.

Straight from the plate

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Above: Mike Hailwood on the EMC. His race was ended when the exhuast pipe came adrift.



Above: Ron Langston tears along on his Norton.

Straight from the plate





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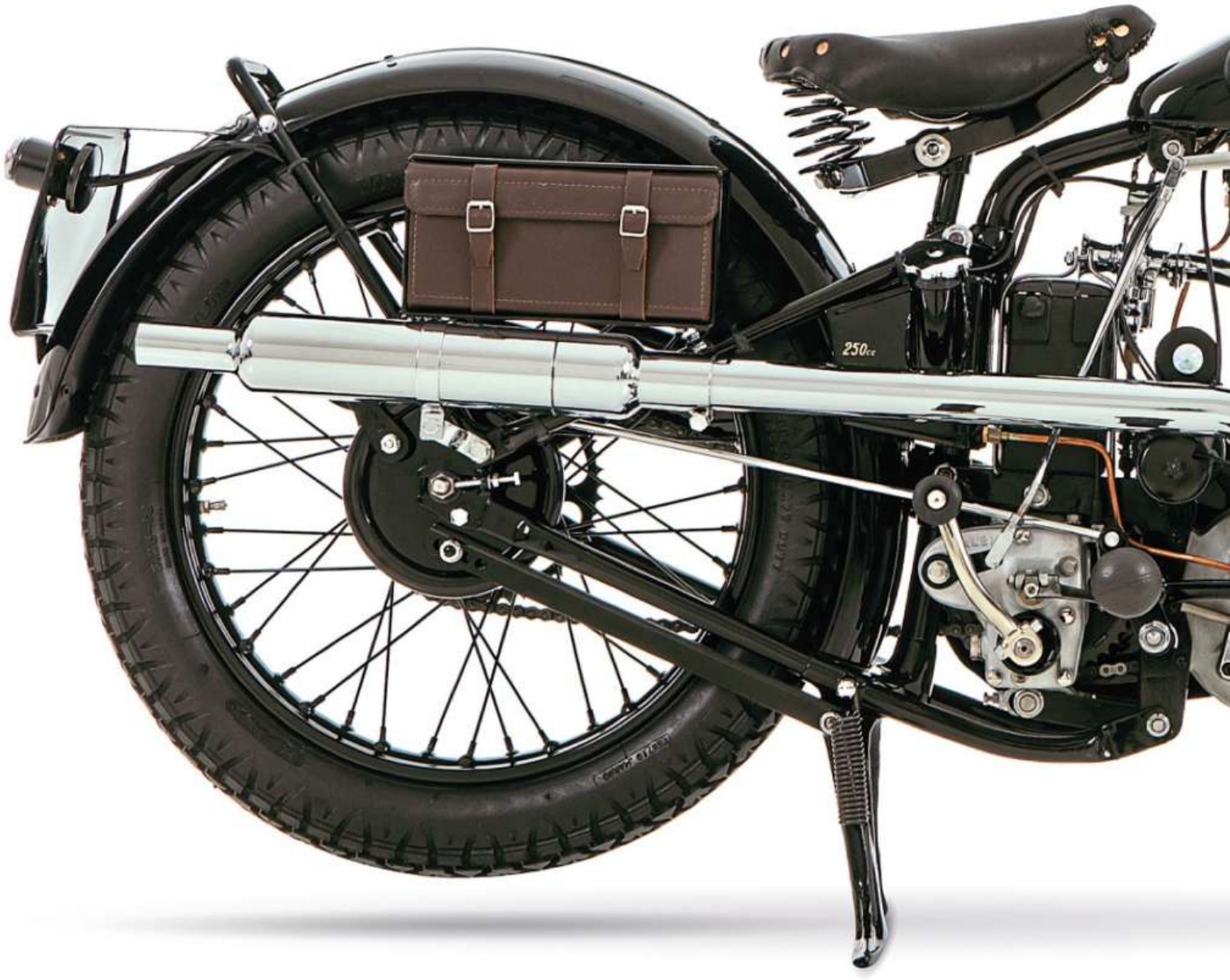
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1935 Montgomery






AMPS


JAP


Montgomery
J.A.P
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JAP

Stunning post-vintage single

Derek Saunders is the owner of this fabulous 1935 JAP-engined Montgomery, which must be one of the most handsome little singles that the British firm ever made.

Words: MICHAEL BARRACLOUGH
Photography: GARY CHAPMAN

This beautiful Montgomery is 80 years old this year, though you certainly wouldn't know it from looking. Derek first came across this motorcycle in 1985 and, although the logos were missing on one side of the petrol tank, he snapped the little single up and set about restoring it.

This machine is the 250cc standard model from 1935, which a piece of period sales literature informs me was dubbed the 'Special', as opposed to the 'Standard' or any similar term. This version differs from the more high-spec 'De-Luxe' model in that it has pressed-steel forks and painted wheels, among other things, while the 'De-Luxe' 250cc model (or the 'Terrier' as my piece of sales literature calls it) had tubular steel Druid girder forks and chromium-plated rims. Derek believes the pressed-steel girder forks on his Montgomery to be of Webb design, which matches up perfectly to what is listed in the period specifications.



A knackered gearbox mainshaft and a missing layshaft were two of the problems Derek had to fix in order to bring the Albion three-speed gearbox back to life, but perhaps the most noticeable problem was the issue of the missing logo on one side of the petrol tank. Derek enlisted the help of Lewis Templeton, who was able to track down a gentleman who traced the original logo and then meticulously hand-painted it on to the petrol tank.

Founded by Bill Montgomery in Bury St Edmunds, Montgomery was primarily a manufacturer of trailers and forecars. The company moved into sidecars in 1904 and eventually into motorcycles in 1905, producing 5hp V-twins that it could couple with its sidecars and thus began selling complete outfits. Soon the expanding firm moved to Coventry. Up until the First World War the company's main source of revenue was its sidecars, but after the war Montgomery really began to develop its motorcycles, using proprietary engines from the likes of JAP, MAG and Villiers, among others.

Entering into the 30s – when machines like Derek's 250cc single were being made – Montgomery adopted the use of dog names for their machines, such as the 'Terrier' mentioned previously. Other names included the 'Greyhound,' 'Bulldog' and 'Retriever', though they were never allocated to any specific model. The dog names correlated more to a certain range of engine sizes. For example the 'Greyhound' moniker seemed to be used predominately for machines ranging from 250cc to 500cc in engine size, though this rule seems not to have been iron-clad – the various dog monikers did tend to shift around a bit. Montgomery kept producing motorcycles until 1940, when one of the first Second World Wat air raids hit Coventry. The Montgomery works were destroyed, and the firm never recovered. Thankfully machines such as Derek's 250cc single preserve the heritage of a British motorcycle manufacturer that was snuffed out too soon. End



FINER DETAILS

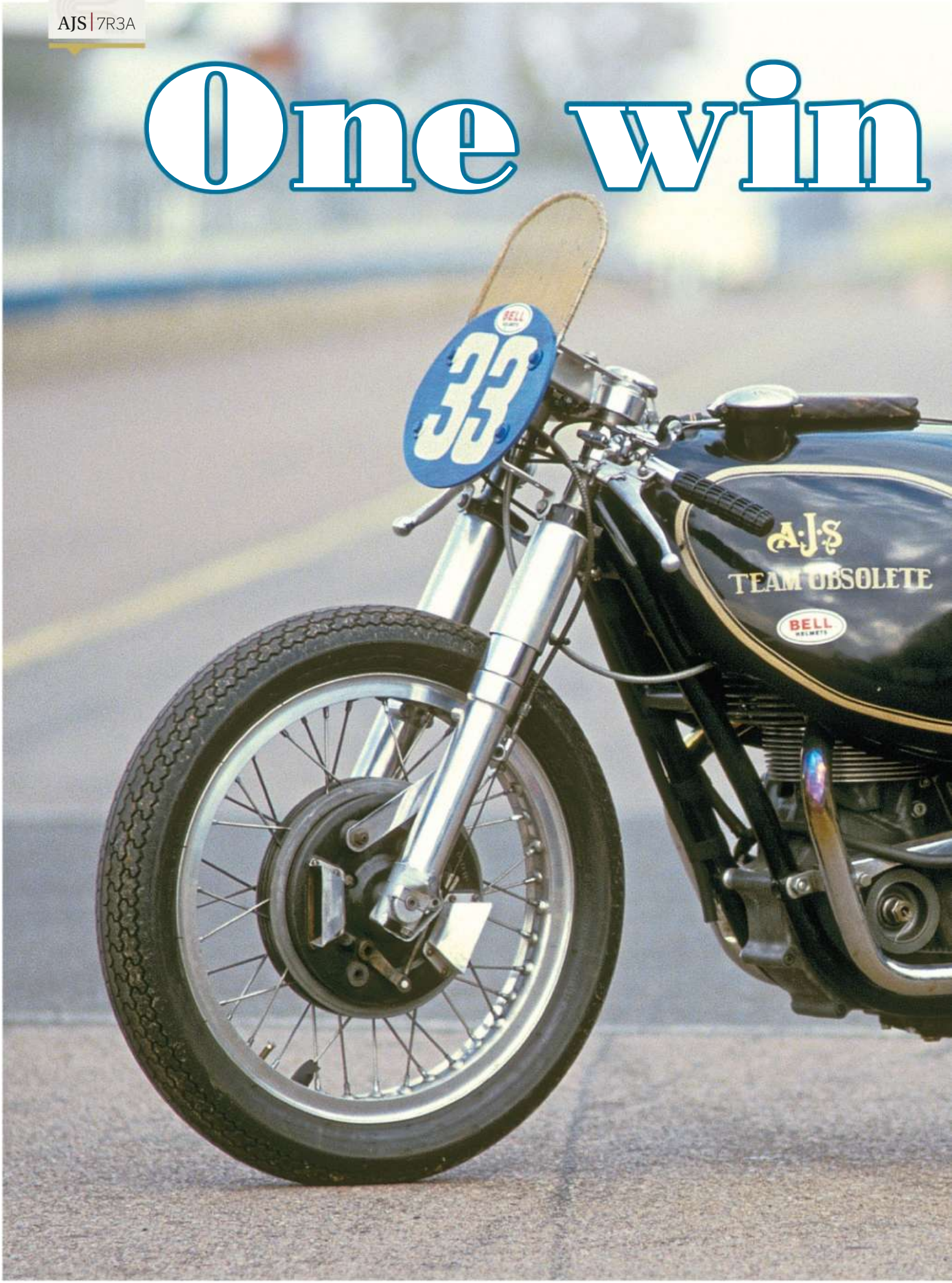
1935 MONTGOMERY

ENGINE:
249cc ohv single
BORE x STROKE:
62.5mm x 80mm
CARBURETTOR:
Amal down draught twist grip
GEARBOX:
Albion three-speed gearbox
SUSPENSION:
Pressed-steel Webb girder fork in front, rigid back end
LIGHTING AND IGNITION:
Lucas dynamo and coil
BRAKES:
Six-inch rear brake, five-inch front brake
PETROL TANK CAPACITY:
Two gallons

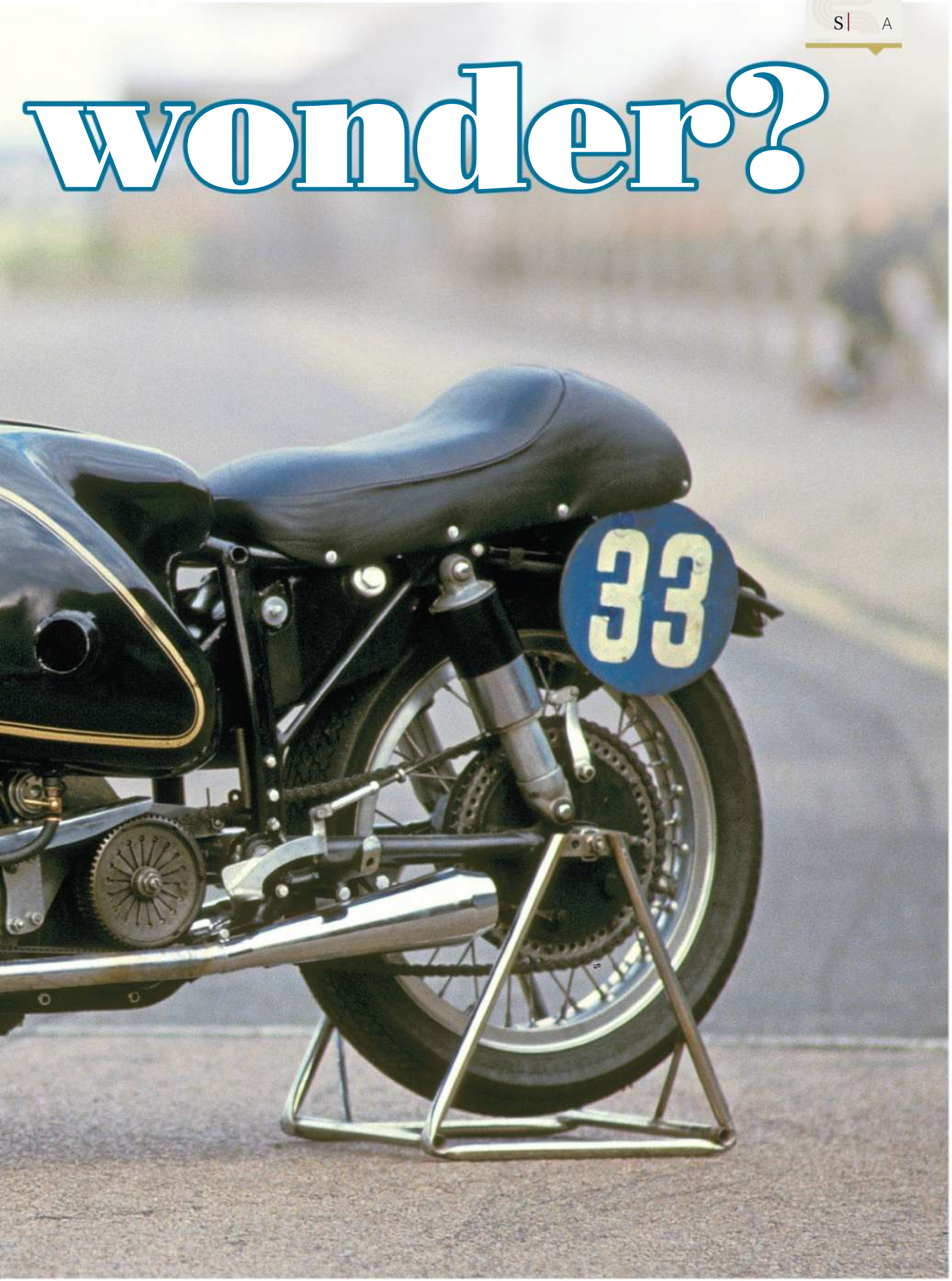
"This version differs from the more high-spec 'De-Luxe' model in that it has pressed-steel forks and painted wheels."



One win



wonder?





It is now 61 years since the final Isle of Man TT victory – and last Grand Prix win – registered by Britain's historic AJS marque, when New Zealander Rod Coleman won the 1954 Junior TT at a record speed of 91.51 mph in a one-two victory from team-mate Derek Farrant, each aboard the company's complex three-valve triple-ohc single-cylinder 7R3A. Fitted in a lowboy frame carrying a massive 6½-gallon fuel tank that enabled the Kiwi rider to complete the gruelling five-lap, 189-mile race non-stop, it was also the first World Championship GP race victory and the first TT win for a New Zealand rider.

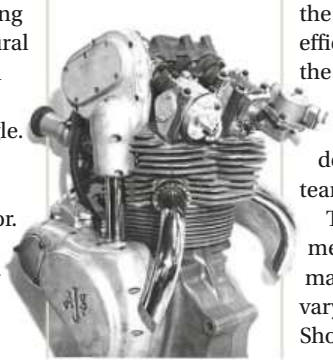
The 349cc AJS 7R 'Boys' Racer,' which debuted in 1948 and remained in production for 15 years, is recognised as one of the most iconic British road racing motorcycles of all time. But while AJS won the inaugural 500cc World Championship in 1949 with Les Graham on the E90 Porcupine twin, the firm was unable to match that success in the 350cc class with the 7R single. Buoyed by booming postwar sales, AMC's directors decided to invest in a radical new three-valve 'triple-knocker' version of the single-cam AJS 7R motor.

During the winter of 1951/2 a revised version of the 7R engine was designed by Ike Hatch, no stranger to complexity who, in 1933, had created the intricate 'Mechanical Marvel' radial-valve Excelsior 250cc TT winner. Hatch's new engine used the same essential bottom end design as Phil Walker's original four-stud 7R motor, but with the 7R crankcase castings revised to accept the five-stud layout of the 7R3A variant. The 7R3A contained a shorter-stroke crankshaft delivering 75.5x78mm dimensions, as opposed to the standard 7R's 74x81 mm format, and this variant was fitted with a radical new cylinder head design.

Above: **The engine is clearly not standard 7R.**

Opposite: **The bulbous pannier tank makes for a strange rear view.**

Below: **The 7R3B engine, which dispensed with the camchain in favour of shaft drive.**



Hatch did what nowadays appears a very curious thing, but which in the context of his time was entirely understandable, in designing an unusual cylinder head that incorporated a single inlet valve, but twin exhaust valves, each of the three operated by its own camshaft. In these days of modern metals and higher octane fuel, engine designers are more concerned about how to get the mixture into the combustion chamber, and fill it as efficiently and completely as possible, with getting rid of the burned gasses a secondary factor.

Yet burnt exhaust valves and broken valve springs were a constant problem in Hatch's day, hence his design, which was employed by the AJS factory race team for three full seasons up to and including 1954.

There were flaws. The fixed centres of the camchain meant it was a time-consuming process, involving the manufacture of new pistons with an altered crown, to vary the compression ratio from the original 10:1 ratio. Shortly before he died in October 1954, Hatch remedied





this by redesigning the camdrive to employ shaft drive to the rear, an inlet camshaft incorporating Oldham couplings and bevel gears throughout, thus permitting greater ease of experimentation. He shortened the stroke still further, adopting modern-seeming 79x71mm dimensions for 348cc. Sadly, Hatch's death meant the development of the 7R3B, as this engine was known, was curtailed, and it never raced.

The first triple-knocker engine was installed in an unmodified 7R frame, making its GP debut in the 1952 Swiss GP at Berne, with AJS's new recruit Coleman finishing second. The Kiwi went on to finish runner-up again in the season-ending Italian GP at Monza, and place fourth overall in the 350cc World Championship. In October 1952 AJS took Coleman, Bill Doran, French AJS importer Georges Monneret – also a crack rider – and his son Pierre to Montlhéry to set 13 new world records with the 7R3, ranging from one hour to seven hours, and 50km up to 1000km, averaging 115.66mph for the hour.

But in 1953 Moto Guzzi entered the fray with its potent twin-cam single. The low centre of gravity and better aerodynamics of the Guzzi, with its horizontal cylinder, must obviously have set minds working in the AMC race shop, and an all-new pannier-tanked version of the 7R3A was produced for 1954.

The older version of the 7R3 signed off with its first GP victory on May 30 in the 1954 French GP, with lone AJS works rider Pierre Monneret winning his home race. Coleman and the rest of the AJS works team had given the race a miss, opting instead to focus on practice for the Junior TT on June 14, which Coleman duly won. It was the first Isle of Man TT victory for AJS since 1930.

That victorious debut was as good as it got for the ultimate version of the triple-knocker Ajay, leaving Coleman to wind up third in the final World Championship points table. Then, in February 1955 AMC announced it would no longer be competing in Grand Prix racing with specially developed factory machines.

Hatch's position as AMC's Chief Engineer was filled by Jack Williams, who examined the possibility of producing a customer version of the bevel-drive 7R3B. "But it was just all too complicated a design," he once told me. "The manufacturing costs would also have been higher, too. But its shorter-stroke layout was definitely advantageous, so I used that as the basis for updating the existing single overhead-camshaft 7R."

Accordingly, for 1956 the 7R was revamped, incorporating the 75.5x78mm configuration, and inasmuch as Jack Williams' seminal G50 Matchless engine that appeared in 1958 was created by simply boring out the later 7R engine to 90x78mm, there's a case for saying that it derives its ancestry directly from the three-cam works 350cc racer as well.

FINER DETAILS

AJS 7R3A

ENGINE
Air-cooled triple-ohc single-cylinder three-valve four-stroke with chain camshaft drive

DIMENSIONS
75.5 x 78mm

CAPACITY
349 cc

OUTPUT
42bhp at 8000rpm

COMPRESSION RATIO
12.5:1

CARBURETTOR
1⅜inch (35mm) Amal GP with remote float chamber

IGNITION
Lucas magneto running 34º of advance

GEARBOX
Six-speed Quaife with belt primary drive

CLUTCH
Multiplate dry

CHASSIS
Duplex cradle tubular steel frame with single top tube and vertical seat posts

WHEELBASE
55in/1395mm

SUSPENSIO
Front: AMC telescop forks. Rear: Tubular steel swingarm with twin AMC Jampot shocks

BRAKES
Front: 8.25in/210mm twin leading-shoe drum. Rear: 8.25in/210mm single leading-shoe drum

TYRES/WHEELS
Front: 3.50/3.25 x 18 Dunlop KR124 on WM2/1.85in. Akront wire-wheeled rim. Rear: 3.50 x 18 Dunlop KR124 on WM2/1.85in. Akront wire-wheeled rim

WEIGHT
285lbs dry

TOP SPEED
120mph

YEAR OF MANUFACTURE
1954

OWNER
Team Obsolete, Brooklyn, NY, USA

Racer test

This triple-camshaft three-valve 350cc AJS 7R3A has been campaigned for the past 30 years in the USA and Europe, by the New York-based Team Obsolete équipe. One of only four complete 7R3As built, it's the sole survivor in running condition, although rumours persist of another languishing in South America.

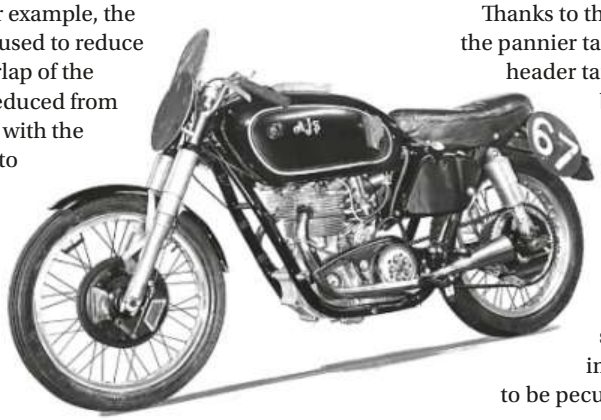
Nobody knows whether the Team Obsolete 7R3A, bearing chassis no. 7R3-F5, is Rod Coleman's TT winner. But it seems improbable that engine no. A5/54 that is fitted to it took the Kiwi to victory in the TT, since according to AMC race shop personnel, Coleman's engine was so completely worn out after the end of the 1954 season it was more or less scrap.

The AJS was originally part of the Stanford Hall Museum collection, but when this was broken up in 1985, Team Obsolete acquired the bike, only to find much of the engine internals missing. This necessitated large-scale reconstruction work. In doing so the opportunity was taken to alter some details of the specification in order to make the bike more rideable in present-day Historic racing. So, for example, the vernier adjustment on the cams was used to reduce the considerable degree of valve overlap of the works motor, ignition advance was reduced from 37 to 34 degrees, compression raised with the aid of a new piston to 12.5:1 in order to take advantage of the high-octane fuel available, and a new six-speed Quaife gearbox replaces the original Burman four-speeder, incorporating a belt-drive primary. For longer life, the original, very short 7R3A conrod, measuring just 5.75in between centres, was shot-peened and fitted to a special crankpin incorporating INA needle roller bearings instead of the original rollers, while the skirts of the piston are cut away to clear the flywheels at BDC. Any original parts like the gearbox that have been removed are stored, and can be refitted any time Team Obsolete chooses. All fair enough.

Right: **Rod Coleman's 1954 Junior TT-winning 7R3.**

Below: **The earlier incarnation of the 7R3, without the pannier tank.**

Bottom: **Alan Cathcart gets to experience the 7R3.**



I was less happy about the changes the team had made to the cycle parts. It was now fitted with 18-inch wheels and fat Dunlop KR124 tyres, when there was perfectly good 19-inch race rubber available from Avon, but the biggest cosmetic disappointment was the new fuel tank the team had made between the time the static photos were taken at Donington and the action shots were taken at Savannah. To me, it's important to keep the external appearance of such an historic bike as this as original as possible, and the large pannier fuel tank of the 7R3A was such a trademark that it was wrong to alter it – and now Rob Iannucci has recognised the error of his ways. Bravo!

Thanks to the weir-type fuel system entailed by the pannier tank layout, it's necessary to prime the header tank incorporated in the main fuel tank before starting the engine. AJS works mechanics did this by standing the bike vertically upright on the back wheel, but you can achieve the same result by pushing it around a bit before trying to fire it up. There's no air control, just an ignition retard lever, and in spite of the high compression the AJS starts quite easily. Hop aboard and you immediately discover the riding position to be peculiar; you're practically doing a press-up





on the low-slung, clip-on handlebars all the time you're on board. The bars must be set quite flat to clear the fuel tank on full lock, yet the seat places you far back, almost over the rear hub. When I rode the 7R3A briefly at Donington, I noticed my knees slotted comfortably into the recesses behind the tank so I was able to brace myself against the back of the tank under braking. But riding the revised version, this advantage had been dispensed with.

Comfortable, the 7R3A isn't. Lowering the whole motorcycle was a vain effort to obviate the necessity of fitting the full streamlining. Moto Guzzi had it, and it was miles an hour faster in a straight line with a slightly less powerful bike, because the AMC management was reluctant to follow suit.

Riding the triple-knocker Ajay proved to be the diametric opposite of what I'd anticipated. I expected it to be all top end, very cammy, to have to be clutched like mad out of slow corners, yet be as stable and dependable in handling as any standard 7R. Instead, the reworked engine was pretty smooth and flexible, forgiving to the point of allowing you to let the revs drop as low as 5400rpm without stuttering, though there's bad megaphonitis from 4800rpm up to that mark; exiting a tight corner you do have to clutch it hard to obtain forward motion. With the six-speed gearbox fitted, it's relatively easy to keep it in the powerband, but this must have been very hard with four-speed transmission. A 2800rpm powerband isn't a huge amount to play with. Still, the clean power delivery and smooth build of power made it a befitting bike on which to grope round an unfamiliar track in the wet.

By contrast, though, the Ajay's handling can best be described as fingertip – in spite of the greater contact patch of the modern 18-inch tyres, it felt twitchy and nervous and as I found on my one reasonably quick dry lap at Donington, it likes to push the front wheel in a turn, with quite a noticeable degree of understeer. Without doubt the problem is one of weight distribution as the bike was designed for the two-hour GPs of the 1950s, not the short circuit sprints of today, for which



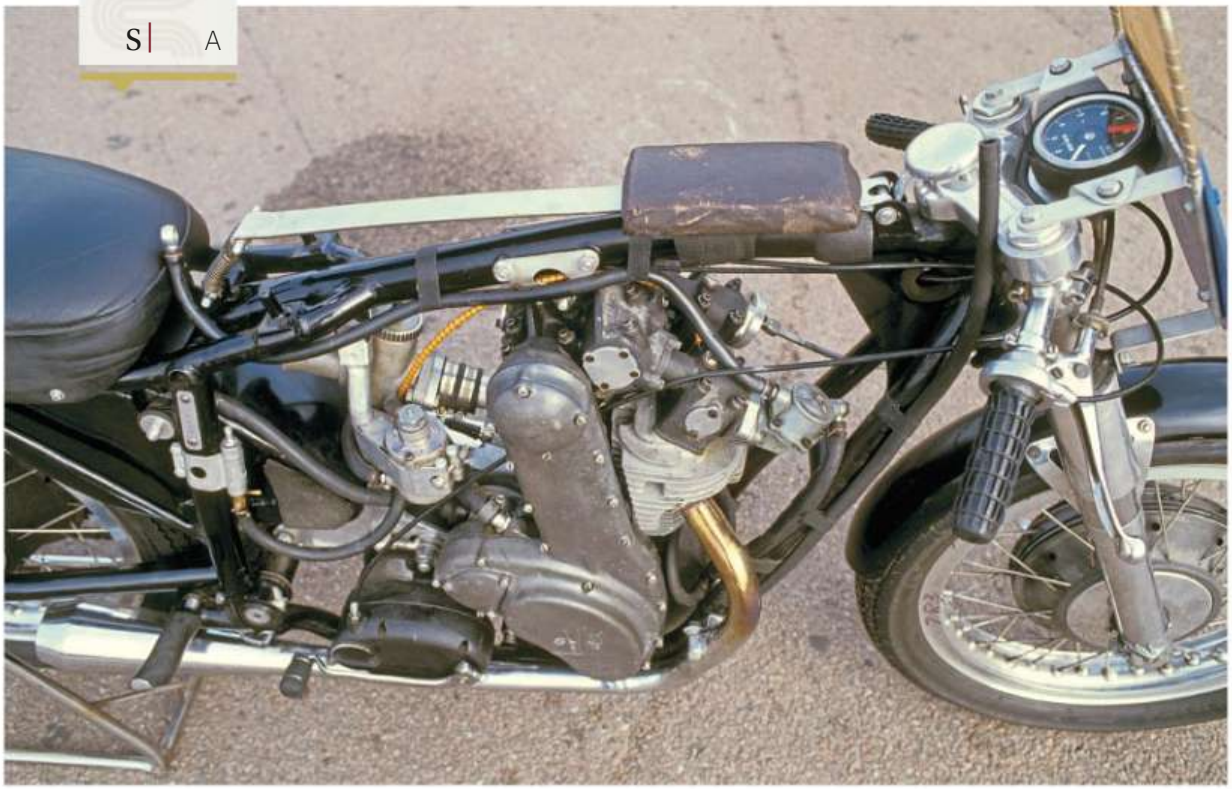
AJS 7R3A UPDATE:
Robert Iannucci speaks

As an avowed enthusiast of AMC's single-cam Grand Prix racers, Team Obsolete patron Robert Iannucci is in a unique position to evaluate the AJS 7R3A's place in the scheme of things, since he owns several 7R racers and continues to enter them in Classic racing today. Here's his take on it.

"At Team Obsolete we've had the unique opportunity to compare the three-valve 7R3A, with a high compression piston fitted and using modern race fuel, to the last factory two-valve 7R2 motor with the same 75.5x78mm dimensions. We set up our 1954 7R3A with cam timing similar to our 1962 7R2, with the same type 1⅜in Grand Prix carb and 12.5:1 compression ratio. We had no issues with tractability, acceleration or reliability, and the 7R3A motor gave more power than our best 7R2. We ran the 7R3A with a six-speed Team Obsolete AMC-type gearbox and with the original four-speed Burman unit. Even with the four-speed transmission the 7R3A was formidable – much faster than the 7R2 with a six-speed! Comparing the 7R3A, as run in 1954, with a 1962 7R2 is like comparing apples to oranges – only by setting up the 7R3A with 1962-era compression ratio, cam timing, and carb type, and using 100 octane fuel, can an accurate comparison be made, as we have done. On that basis, quite simply, the 7R3A was brilliant."

"In my opinion, the AJS 7R3A is the finest single-cylinder British race engine ever built. I know this, because at Team Obsolete we have raced them all. No one else can make this claim. The design suffered from lack of budget and resources, which after AMC took Norton over in 1952, were wrongly directed toward the 350cc Manx."

"Finally, I'd like to underline that while Alan's criticism of the changes we made to the aesthetics of the bike were perfectly valid, including not only modifying the fuel tank shape but also fitting 18-inch rims and a belt primary drive that we used with the Team Obsolete six-speed AMC type gearbox, we have since returned the 7R3 to its original specs, which is how we ran it at Jurby in the Classic TT fortnight in 2013 and 2014."



Left: Though it is clearly a 7R, it is unlike any other.

Below: Team Obsolete mechanic Jed Snyder (left) stands alongside Robert Iannucci.

only a few pints/litres of fuel are necessary, compared to the six gallons or more carried by Coleman in order to do a five-lap TT non-stop at 36mpg. With a mostly empty fuel tank there's insufficient weight amidships to compensate for the fact that the stretched-out riding position shoves the rider's weight back over the rear wheel and this, in turn, lightens the front end even with your body stretched out across the tank as you grope for the handlebars.

With a seat height of just 29in compared to 32in on the standard model, it was faster not only in a straight line thanks to the reduced frontal area, but also flicked through corners like the Donington chicane much more easily, thanks to the lower centre of gravity.

But at the end of the day, given the benefit of hindsight, it seems to me that the AJS 7R3A was a compromised design, which asked as many questions as it answered. Ike Hatch did only half the job in designing the cylinder head but why three valves when a four-valver would have been even better? For what seems dogmatic reasons, AMC refused to fit streamlining, instead obliging the rider to lay almost prone for two hours at a time in an uncomfortable riding position that must have affected his stamina and concentration – and furthermore, by trying to get the fuel tank to do the job of a fairing, they ended up with weight distribution that was all wrong. They stuck ostrich-like to a four-speed gearbox and their own ineffective Jampot rear dampers, and refused to take serious streamlining seriously, as Moto Guzzi did.

The bottom line is Guzzi won 24 GP races and five 350cc World titles in a row from 1953-57, while AJS had only Rod Coleman's solitary Junior TT victory and Monneret's French GP win to its credit. Yet out of this compromised machine, thanks to his brilliant development work, Jack Williams developed what were arguably – begging Norton's pardon – the ultimate British single-cylinder privateer racers, the short-stroke 7R and its G50 big brother. Maybe AMC had the last laugh after all... End



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Bonhams



Dave Bickers took on the Greeves team leader mantle for 1960, winning the 250cc European championship.





World 500cc champion Bill Nilsson, on the Husqvarna in Sweden.

Black clouds and SUNSHINE

Despite the gloomy start, 1960 was to be a good year for British scrambling. Established star Jeff Smith took the 500cc British Championship trophy, adding to his 1955 and 1956 awards, while new boy Dave Bickers scooped both the British and European 250cc crowns.

Words: RICHARD ROSENTHAL **Photography:** MORTONS MEDIA GROUP ARCHIVE

Each branch of any particular motorsport is a family. There are rotten eggs, good guys, jesters and many sound relatives. Highlights lift the spirits of many, while tragedy hits but unites all. And in 1960 the European motocross world had its share of sorrow. As the season opened, the British and European scrambles world mourned one of its giants in Brian 'Strawberry' Stonebridge, at 6ft 4in a giant in stature as well as reputation. Mid-season gloom descended after the death of 1958 500cc European Champion Rene Baeten, killed competing in a Belgian national event.

Cambridgeshire-born Stonebridge enjoyed his first scrambles win in 1948 racing his 350cc BSA Gold Star. By 1950, he was a regular winner who was admired for his inventive machine development. Strawberry stepped into Basil Hall's shoes at Matchless, riding for the Plumstead factory 1950-54, then moved to BSA for the next two seasons. Often in the Small Heath competition shop, he not only worked on four-strokes but also two-stroke development in the company of Herman Meier.

As a two-stroke enthusiast, Brian revelled in developing fast 125cc Bantam powered scramblers and then an indecently fast 150cc version. Somehow, he wrapped his lanky frame around these tiny machines to begin his Jack the Giant slaying ways. As BSA reduced its comp shop staff, Strawberry moved in 1957 to Greeves and into a chicken shed at Thundersley, Essex, which became the Greeves comp shop. Suddenly, Greeves' Villiers-powered works scramblers had near doubled their power output and the trials models were simply much better. Development also helped improve the production models.

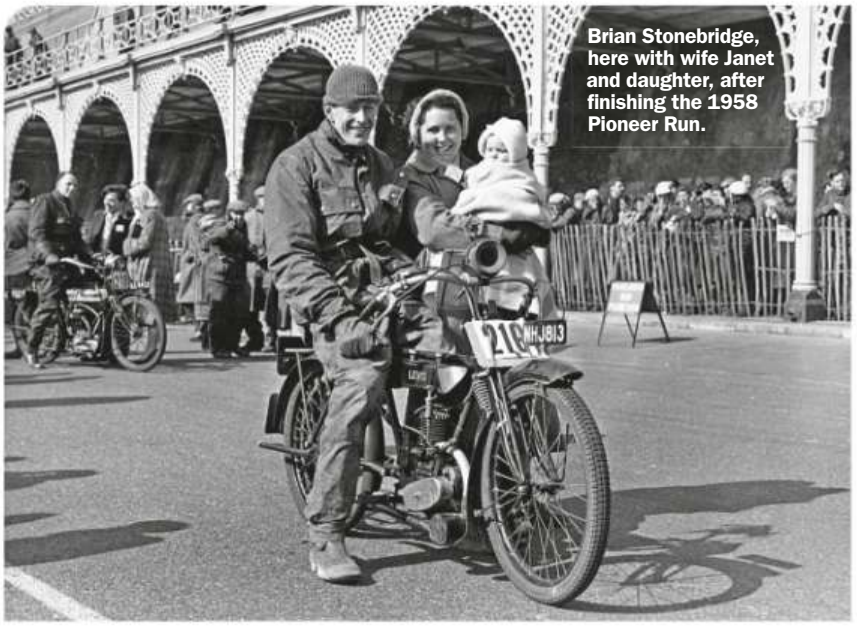
Brian, with 197cc and later 246cc scramblers, continued his giant-felling ways in the UK and across Europe. Much to boss Bert Greeves' annoyance, he built and raced a NSU Max powered 250cc scrambler; in fact two were built at the factory and another two by privateers. After finishing second in the 1959 European 250cc title to Rolf Tibblin's Husqvarna, the future looked rosy. Then on October 21, 1959, Stonebridge was killed travelling back from a business meeting with Bert Greeves, their car involved in a head-on crash near Retford, Notts. Aged 30, Brian left behind a wife and two young children. One of the nicest and most sincere tributes entitled 'BGS – a brilliant legend' was written

and published the following week in *Motor Cycle News* by fellow Greeves ace Mike Jackson (today aka Old Mike Jackson or 'OMJ').

Stunned, the off-road motorcycling world dusted itself down and, although sadder, got on with the job of developing and racing or trialling competition machines. At Greeves, Bert made his recovery and two young pretenders who had been nurtured by Strawberry stepped up to the plate. In addition to their British successes, Dave Bickers took the 1960 and 1961 250cc European motocross titles and Don Smith the 1964 and 1966 European trials titles.

On Sunday, March 20, 1960, the British off-road family had its opportunity to pay their respects to one of the sport's giants, and a huge crowd (claimed in sources to number 84,000) stood in silence at the specially arranged Brian Stonebridge Memorial Scramble as after a brief tribute and The Light Infantry Junior Bandsmen played The Last Post, there followed the customary minute's silence before the action started. As the initial 30 riders lined up and then unleashed their machines for the first leg of the Memorial Race, the peace of the Shropshire countryside was shattered.

Derek Rickman (499cc Triumph Metisse) took the early lead from John Clayton with Jeff Smith (both 499cc BSA), Dave Curtis (498cc Matchless), Geoff Ward (498cc AJS) and Arthur Lampkin (499cc BSA) swapping places. Later Rickman clouted the fence and broke a finger and finally Curtis headed Smith by 100 yards, with Lampkin third. After heats and finals for the supporting races, almost all the field except Rickman lined up for the second of the memorial races. As the elastic tape pinged free, Smith led Clayton pursued by Curtis, Lampkin, Ward, Phil Nex (499cc BSA), with the 250s of Bryan Sharp (Greeves) and Brian Martin (BSA) chasing hard. At the flag it was Smith from Curtis and Lampkin. In the tally of times from two rounds, Curtis beat Smith by two seconds, with Lampkin third and Martin fourth.



Brian Stonebridge, here with wife Janet and daughter, after finishing the 1958 Pioneer Run.

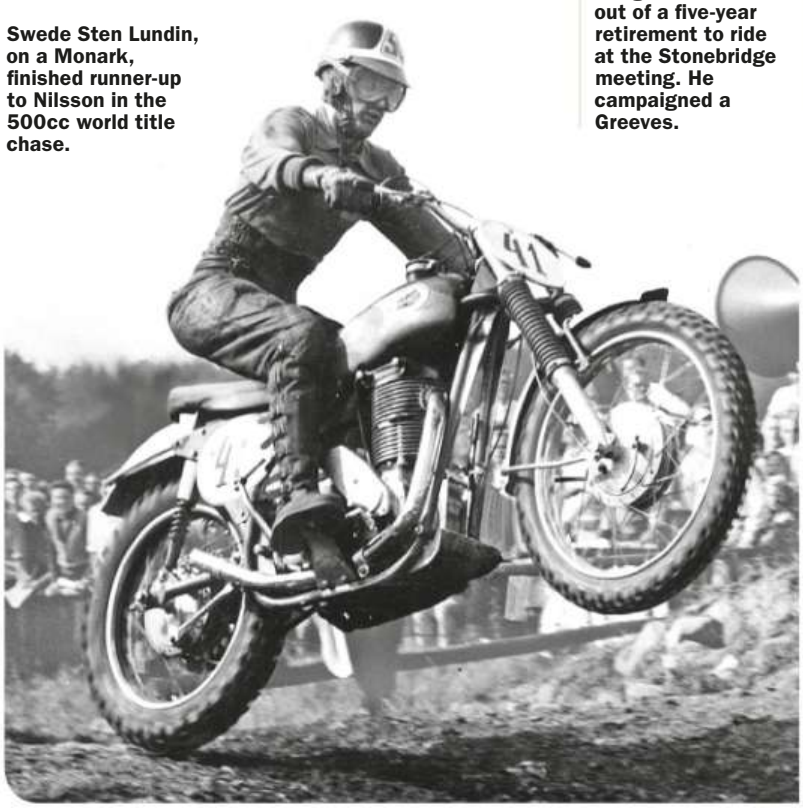


Above: The programme for the Stonebridge memorial meeting. The crowd numbered 84,000.

Above right: Belgian Auguste Mingels came out of a five-year retirement to ride at the Stonebridge meeting. He campaigned a Greeves.



Swede Sten Lundin, on a Monark, finished runner-up to Nilsson in the 500cc world title chase.



In the supporting race finals, Alan Clough (246cc Dot) took the first event from Jim Sheehan (499cc BSA) while the second race was Mike Jackson's (246cc Greeves) from Peter Taft (499cc BSA). Later Cute Bate, secretary for the organising Salop MC, wrote letters to the press entitled 'Thanks a Million' for all the support. In today's jargon, Mr and Mrs Bate and the Salop club turned a negative into a positive – and the coming summer looked suddenly sunnier.

Many Continental riders held Strawberry in high regard, travelling in some cases huge distances just to be there, the mood perfectly encapsulated by the jolly Belgian double 500cc European Champion Auguste Mingels, who came out of a five-year retirement '…to ride in honour of my friend.' Janet Stonebridge presented the trophies and was moved by everyone's generosity.

A couple of weeks later, the Coddenham Flyer Dave Bickers (246cc Greeves) started his European Championship challenge on the fast grassland circuit at Payerne (near Geneva) Switzerland with second and third place finishes in the two races, enough to secure him a win over Jaromir Cizek (250cc Jawa) and Arthur Lampkin (249cc BSA) and a maximum eight points. Later in the month riders battled the thick Ardennes mud for the second round of the 250cc European Crown at the Val Fassotte circuit. Heavy rain, which abated before the racing, and strong winds reduced the crowd to just 4000, who watched 23 of the top-notch lightweight scramblers chase the points.

Slippery climbs, steep descents coated in glutinous



mud and endless shunts including Dave Bickers tail-ending Jeff Smith took any fun out of the day. It was just a battle for points. At the close, it was initially reported as Cizek from Bickers, Lampkin and Smith. In fact, Lampkin finished ahead of Bickers and the corrected result ensured Cizek inched into the title lead. At the Sittendorf circuit near Vienna, Swede Rolf Tibblin (Husqvarna, 1959 250cc European Champion) proved he wasn't a one-trick pony taking the first round of the 500cc World Championship from fellow countryman Bill Nilsson (Husqvarna) and the Belgian Rene Baeten (Matchless). And a week later Stig Rickardsson (Husqvarna) bettered Dave in the 250cc French GP, but as Cizek failed to score he went ahead in the title chase. A fortnight after Tibblin took 500cc class honours again.

As the season raced by, Bickers increased his stranglehold on the 250cc European crown with places and a win in Poland, while Tibblin's star slipped. On to the mayhem that was the Italian 250cc GP. The races were held on the narrow Avigliana circuit clinging to a hillside near Turin. An international press agency described the organisation 'as leaving a lot to be desired.' Smith and Lampkin were disqualified from starting with the organisers having timed just their first two laps, claiming them too slow. They had never ridden the track before. After appeal, the judges intervened and the organisers relented. Later Bickers was felled by Zemen (CZ) to soon retire with a damaged foot and his main rivals in the championship race, Jaromir Cizek and Miroslav Soucek, failed too. At the final flag the Italian Emilio Osterero (Bianchi) took the honours and his



Above: The loss of 1958 500cc World Champion Rene Beaten occurred during the 1960 season.

Top: Jeff Smith was British 500cc champion, as well as 350cc European runner up. Here, on the 500cc Goldie at the 1960 Experts Grand National.

first championship points of the season, while 'too slow' Smith finished a creditable fourth.

If Bickers et al felt fate treated them badly that day, spare a thought for John Draper, Jim Sheehan and John Burton. En route to Imola for the 500cc round, their pick-up truck overturned, injuring Sheehan and Draper while their machines and truck were totalled. As the battered trio flew home to recuperate, the Swede Sten Lundin (Monark) took maximum points with privateer Don Rickman (Metisse) second. A week later at the East German 250cc GP Bickers was for once was totally out-Sweded by the Husqvarna trio of Stig Rickardson, Torsten Hallman and Lennart Dahlen to finish fourth, but his title claim strengthened.

By now, the motocross world had settled to the absence of Brian Stonebridge's lankly frame lofting his Greeves past the field only to be plunged again into gloom with the death of another legend, Rene Baeten. His fatal accident happened during an international meeting at Stekene, Flanders. The 33-year-old Belgian with a decade's top-flight experience, was twice runner up in the European 500cc championship for Sarolea and clinched the 1958 World 500cc crown by eight points riding a works FN. He lived near Antwerp with his wife and two young daughters.

Arthur Lampkin scored his first outright 250cc GP win of the season in Finland, with Dahlen second and Bickers fifth, before the show moved onto Luxembourg and a win for BSA again, this time piloted by Jeff Smith with Bickers second and next his local track, Shrublands Park. But not before the newspapers headed with

'Nilsson turns on the heat,' informing the 27-year-old Swede, a heating engineer from Hallstavik, set a sizzling pace at the Hawkstone Park round. Reality was Nilsson from Rickman, Johanson, Lampkin, Smith and Tibblin.

Shrublands Park near Ipswich, not far from Bickers' home of Coddenham usually gave the Suffolk boy the advantage, but a confident Jeff Smith, fresh from his ace performance the day before at the Experts Grand National, and a seized engine in the first leg snuffed out Dave's chances of any championship points. Armed with another Greeves, Bickers led by a country mile in the second leg, with Smith second way ahead of Stig Eriksson. Despite no points, Dave still led the title chase by 10 points.

A huge crowd witnessed Nilsson win the first leg of the Dutch GP run on a sandy course near Nijmegen in late July, with Broer Dirks (BSA) and Rolf Tibblin in the places. Nilsson, Tibblin and Dirks powered all out for the lead, then Nilsson's Husqvarna slowed and issued clouds of blue smoke, but kept running. Tibblin took the lead, Dirks' magneto failed, leaving Tibblin a clear run to the flag with Nilsson's Husky crawling across the line second.

With a round to go, Nilsson crushed his rivals on the sandy circuit near Namur, Belgium, to regain the World 500cc Motocross World title. An ex-BSA works supported rider, Bill secured his 1957 world crown on his self-developed bike named Crescent, powered by an enlarged AJS 7R engine. However, for 1958 it was a works Husqvarna on which he led home fellow Swedes Sten Lundin (Monark), Gunnar Johansson (Lito) and Rolf Tibblin (Husqvarna) with privateer Don Rickman (Metisse) fifth. The final round at Ettelbruck, Luxembourg, didn't affect the overall outcome but Don Rickman's second behind Sten Lundin (Monark) moved him into the runner's-up spot.

Scoring his second European Championship win of the season at the remote Vannas, Sweden circuit, just 150 miles from the Arctic Circle and a very long drive from Suffolk, 22-year-Bickers clinched his first European 250cc crown. After a 'false start' in the first leg prompted by Jeff Smith roaring back to the pits to collect a spare plug for team mate Arthur Lampkin, the British crew finished the first race with the BSAs trailing home Bickers' Greeves. Stig Rickardsson (Husqvarna) hit back in the second leg to win in front of a home crowd of 9000, but Bickers was second to clinch the meeting and his title with a round to go.

If young upstart Bickers rout of the 250cc European Championship contenders on a Greeves was an unpleasant pill to swallow in some quarters of the continent, worse was to come in the Motocross Des Nations at Cassel. Constant drizzle for two days reduced the going to 'soft' or rather glorious mud for the British boys but treacherous glutinous slime for the rest of Europe. In the first heat it was Don Rickman (Metisse) from Dave Curtis (Matchless) with the Dutchmen Dirks (BSA) and Roger Vanderbecken (Triumph) the only others to finish in time to qualify. With axle-deep mud gluing most to the ground, many stars gave up in the second heat, totally exhausted, leaving the only qualifiers Ove Lundell (Monark, Sweden) and Jeff Smith (BSA).

Never before in the history of the event has a field of 42 ace riders, carefully selected from the competing nations, been whittled down to just six finalists. With three riders in the final, GB was the only team qualified to win and a hurriedly convened FIM meeting awarded the trophy to the British trio of Rickman, Curtis and Smith. To salvage something else from the day to excite the crowd, each competing nation was invited to field up to three riders in a 'special scratch race.' With John Burton in place of Rickman and with some continental aces already loading their machines for the long drive home, it was left to Ove at the chequered flag to separate the British aces with Smith leading home Lundell, Curtis and Burton (BSA) for the top places. Best make haste for the ferry, boys. Considering Brian Stonebridge, at times a man of few words (usually 'choice' words) one can only imagine his comment as he looked down on the shenanigans at Cassel that memorable, muddy weekend.

End



With the Metisse script just discernible on the tank, Don Rickman in 1960 action on his own-built machine.



Czech Miroslav Soucek was third in the 250cc title chase. Here, he's at the 1960 Swiss GP.



Completing a Swedish clean sweep of the top three in the 500cc World Championship was Rolf Tibblin. Like champ Nilsson, he was Husqvarna mounted.

1960 EUROPEAN 250cc CHAMPIONSHIP
1 Dave Bickers, GB, Greeves, 48 points
2 Jeff Smith, GB, BSA, 35
3 Miroslav Soucek, Czechoslovakia, Eso, 26

1960 WORLD 500cc CHAMPIONSHIP
1 Bill Nilsson, Sweden, Husqvarna, 38 points
2 Sten Lundin, Sweden, Monark, 36
3 Rolf Tibblin, Sweden, Husqvarna, 26

1960 BRITISH 250cc CHAMPIONSHIP
1 Dave Bickers, Greeves, 32 points
2 Alan Clough, Dot, 12
3 Joe Johnson, Greeves, 9

1960 BRITISH 500cc CHAMPIONSHIP
1 Jeff Smith, BSA, 28 points
2 Don Rickman, Metisse, 20
2 John Burton, BSA, 20

1960 MOTOCROSS DES NATIONS
Great Britain
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Don Rickman, GB, Metisse

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A brief chat with...
Nick Cronin

Words: MICHAEL BARRACLOUGH **Photography:** ROBIN JAMES ENGINEERING SERVICES

Nick Cronin, and his long time friend and fellow motorcycle aficionado John 'Dave' Rosser, are the new hands at the helm of Robin James Engineering Services since the recent retirement of Robin - their aim, just as when Robin was in charge, is to provide the same great service that they always have.

Robin James Engineering Services will no doubt be familiar to those who've played the restoration game before. The company has established a very positive reputation and is often asked to take care of the restoration of some rare and prestigious motorcycles. Its premises are in the town of Leominster in Herefordshire and it is staffed by Nick Cronin and Dave Rosser, who have long been devoted to classic motorcycles and have been in charge of the business since Robin decided to retire. The business was in danger of being closed if a buyer could not be found after Robin left, but Nick and Dave decided the company shouldn't be allowed to fade away and stepped up to the plate, guaranteeing a future for the company and ensuring that other bike lovers had a reliable place to go to get their machines restored.

One of the most important aspects of getting a motorcycle restored is making sure that you are absolutely clear about what parts of the motorcycle require the most attention. Nick explains this is one of the most important aspects of the whole procedure, and it can save no end of grief when the restoration itself is taking shape.



Top: The Robin James Engineering Services workshop.

Above: Dave Rosser, on the left, and his friend and business partner Nick Cronin.

Can you tell me a little of the history of Robin James Engineering Services?

The business was set up by Robin James in round about 1980, doing various engineering jobs. He was doing odd bits and pieces for people before he actually started on his own, but he slowly did more and more restoration work until he specialised in that field, and we became the longest established and probably the best-known restorer of classic motorcycles from the 1890s to the mid-1980s. There's still a small amount of general engineering work that comes our way that requires an engineer to use a lathe or a mill to produce a one-off part rather than making it on CNC (computerised numerical control) machinery.

"We work on all ages from the veteran period through to machines from the 1970s and even into the 1980s."

I heard that Robin retired recently. How has the business changed since his departure, if at all?
Inevitably things do change slightly when there's a new hand at the helm, but we intend to continue to provide the same top-quality service, giving our customers their machines back in a condition that's as good as new – or better in many cases – with modern materials and things, and mechanically as well as just cosmetically. We've got a reputation for quality work that we intend to build on in the future. So that's probably the only change that there will be – we'll be concentrating on that.

How did you first become involved with Robin James Engineering Services Nick?
Well, Dave worked here for 20 years on and off right back to the early days. I've been a customer of the business at odd times over the last 35 years or so, when I've needed something doing that was beyond my own capabilities – in fact Robin did jobs for me several years before he set himself up as a one-man business in the first place. Dave and I have been friends for nearly 40 years and when we heard Robin was going to retire from the business and that, unless a buyer could be found, the business was going to close, we felt that it was too important to the vintage motorcycle movement to be allowed to pass into history. We decided to take it on and keep providing the service to the many people who've come to rely on it.

Do you have a favourite classic machine?
I don't have any one particular favourite. I'm not really interested in anything that was made postwar – it just leaves me cold. I suppose I've had a long-standing love affair with Ariels. I have had various models from a 1926 500cc ohv which I had to pass on because I couldn't start it. I've got a 1932 250cc ohv, a 1936 350cc ohv and a 1937 600cc side-valve combination. I've had, in the past, two 1937 500cc Red Hunters – and after 40 years of owning them I still can't make up my mind whether to keep the 350 and the 600! They are very close to my heart. I also love my 1913 three-speed Triumph and my 1927 350cc ohv Super Sports BSA and my little Skootamota. They've all got their virtues and they are all my favourites for their particular jobs. Dave – when I spoke to him about it – said that if it's a cammy, he likes it. He's got a 1951 International Norton at the moment and he's also got a Venom.

How much of the restoration process can Robin James do 'in house'?
Pretty much everything. The only jobs that we put out are things like casting, plating, heat treatment, crank balancing and crank grinding. Pretty much everything else we do on the premises as we've got the facilities.

NICK AND DAVE'S TIMELINE

1952
Dave Rosser is born.

1953
Nick Cronin is born.

1968
Dave passes his motorcycle test, gets his first bike.

1969
Dave starts Rolls-Royce apprenticeship in Bristol.

1973
Dave employed as an engine fitter in Rolls Royce experimental engine shop

1975
Nick passes his test and gets his first bike

1976
Nick's first Ariel comes along – he still has it!

1980
Dave first works for Robin James, returns in 1988 and 2007.

2015
Nick and Dave take over Robin James Engineering Services.



Top right: A cammy Norton gets some TLC

What is the most challenging aspect of restoring a classic motorcycle in your opinion?
I think the biggest problem that we come up against is finding parts. Things like valves and pistons to adapt for other purposes to suit long-since obsolete machines, and that can be an absolute nightmare. It's a question of going through the piston and valve books to try and find something that is the nearest you can get. There are problems with finding the bits to modify. From our point of view our biggest problem is finding reliable, skilled engineers to get the jobs done to our standards. There are plenty of people out there, but whether they are good enough is hard to gauge. That is a big problem.

Is there a particular type/marque/era of machine that you find yourself restoring more than others, or do you receive a wide variety of different machines?
Not really. We work on all ages from the veteran period through to machines from the 1970s and even into the 80s. It isn't any particular one that sparks people with a similar bike to come to us. As a general rule, we don't work on Japanese machines – not because of any prejudices or anything but because Japanese machines as whole are not designed to be repaired. It's a question of when something is broken you have to get another because it just isn't machinable. Probably the main period we work on is from the 1920s through to the 60s. Again, it could be all sorts. At the moment I think we've got four Square Fours in, but that doesn't mean that we specialise in them.

Do you have any advice for people looking to get a classic machine restored professionally?
Think. Think hard. What people must realise is that if they want to get a bike restored, inevitably it is going to cost much more than the bike is worth commercially afterwards – many times, in some case, depending on the amount of work involved. You're not going to do something where you spend £100 restoring it and increase its value by £1000 – that doesn't happen. It is an expensive procedure, but if you want the results then go to somebody who knows that they're doing. Things take time. If you go to anybody who does restorations, you are the person in the driving seat. If you want the engine restored so that it's reliable, then tell them that is what you want restored. You need to think: "What am I after?" and then make it crystal clear – it saves all sorts of confusion down the line.

End

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FP0030/07/2015

Jack Williams

He was one of the unsung heroes of classic motorcycling; certainly the AJS 7R owes a lot of its racing prowess to improvements made by Jack Williams.

Words: MICHAEL BARRACLOUGH **Photography:** MORTONS MEDIA ARCHIVE

Cecil John Williams – who was known simply as 'Jack' – was born in Cornwall in 1906, though he was raised and educated in Bedford. The young Jack was introduced to motorcycling by a friend, and he rode pillion on the aforementioned friend's motorcycle on a trip to Brighton where they both discovered that the Brighton Speed Trials were being held the following day – an event that is sure to enliven the imagination of any young man.

Of course, financing one's first motorcycle is never an easy task and Jack found a novel way of gathering the funds. He purchased a pig and proceeded to feed it up. When it reached a substantial weight he sold it off at a profit, giving him the money to purchase his first mount.

After honing his skills at local hillclimbs, he decided to try his hand at road racing, choosing Syston Park in Lincolnshire as the venue for his inaugural race. In an interview featured in the November 1994 issue of *The Classic MotorCycle*, Jack's son – the esteemed Peter Williams – mentions his father was "a particularly modest" man, and that only in very special circumstances would he spin out tales of his early racing career. Thankfully, Peter managed to coax the story of that first race at Syston Park out of his father. The sight of the racers hurtling around the narrow track (the surface of which was just loose gravel and only 10ft wide in places) at terrific speeds was nearly enough to deter Jack from competing at all but, after much persuasion, he took to the circuit, coming away with several wins and a handful of fastest laps. Most importantly, however, he was offered a works ride with Raleigh. Peter ascribes this tremendous first victory as one of the reasons he himself started racing.

After his initial triumph at Syston Park, Jack Williams began to ride Raleigh machines at other events, and it was seated on a Raleigh that he began his nine-year long TT career. He was forced to retire in the 1929 Junior and the 1930 Senior TT races, but he managed an extremely commendable fifth place in the 1930 Junior event, which was to be his best finish in his TT career. He was the first person to cover a lap of the TT course in less than 30 minutes – Wal Handley clocked a faster time during that same race (29 mins 41 secs, to Williams' 24 mins 57 secs) – but it was still an extremely laudable feat regardless. His prospects were looking extremely promising going into the 1931 TT, but he took a nasty spill during practice and was knocked unconscious. Vincent-HRD icon Phil Irving was a member of the party that hurried to the Mountain to collect him.

"Jack Williams worked with engines until his death in 1979."

His TT career continued, though he moved from Raleigh to a variety of machines including 500cc Douglas models, 350cc Velocettes and Vincent-HRD singles. When the Second World War loomed, Jack decided to join the RAF. Apparently he did possess a civil pilot's licence, but he did not enlist as a pilot – he was deemed to be just a fraction too old for that. He spent a lot of time in North Africa, where his knowledge of petrol engines continued to grow. When the war ended he joined Vincent as a road tester. Naturally this job was not without its perils, and Jack did end up in hospital on one occasion. At the end of 1949, when Phil Irving returned to Australia, Jack became Vincent's development engineer. He did a lot of important work with Vincent's 'Picador' engine, which was a re-imagined motorcycle engine adapted for use in light aircraft.

In 1954 Jack moved to AMC, where he took the helm of the racing engine development facets of AJS. This is where one of Jack's greatest achievements – the continued improvement of the 7R engine – took place, and it is for this achievement that he is perhaps most famous. He was able to wring much more power out of the engine (raising its output from 37bhp to 41.5bhp by 1960) and imbued it with a wider power band and improved acceleration, thanks to a significant reduction in weight.

After AMC folded in 1966, Jack Williams dabbled in various enterprises, including the development of booster port two-stroke engines with the likes of Joe Ehrlich, and even a period as one of BSA-Triumph's engineering team at Umberslade Hall. In 1972, after much more work concerning engine development, he received an opportunity his son Peter described as something "he had been waiting for all his life". This was the KRM project which, in a nutshell, was a project put forward by businessman John Pickett who wanted to build a 350cc dohc four-cylinder machine that would see off any and all opposition on the racetrack. Unfortunately the project collapsed because of improperly produced components and faults during testing.

Jack Williams continued to work with engines until his death in 1979. Peter describes his father as falling just short of being a workaholic. He would toil way at the factory all day, then return home to sit at his drawing board all night. He remains one of classic motorcycling's unsung heroes, and was reportedly a modest and humble gentleman through and through.

End

Right: Jack Williams as pictured in the early 1960s (possibly 1962).



Ixion – the man behind the words

Celebrating a true pioneer, who was probably the longest-serving writer on matters motorcycling.

Like many of us, I'm fascinated by old books about motorcycling, so I was delighted to pick up a second-hand copy of Ixion's famous Cavalcade of Motorcycling, subtitled The History of The Motor Cycle 1884-1950. Of course there are loads of books about motorcycling, but what makes this one so extraordinary is that its author not only lived through the entire period quoted in the subtitle, but documented every new development via his columns in The Motor Cycle magazine. It seems phenomenal to me that somebody who was there when the earliest motorcycles were made could still be writing about them when many of us started our riding careers. In fact he was there even before the start of motorcycling, and modestly mentions driving a Benz three-wheeler in about 1898, but found it quite car-like and didn't rate it as a motorcycling or tri-cycling experience.

That's not to say Ixion was overly sentimental about motorcycling. He recalls witnessing an early Werner (inevitably top-heavy with its handlebar-mounted engine) skidding, crashing and catching fire; a performance he laconically describes as 'an unnecessarily complicated form of suicide.' Taking a test ride on a Singer Tricycle while an Oxford undergraduate in 1901 he amusingly recounts how the salesman (running alongside) was evidently as ignorant as himself. That becomes less surprising if you read on however, because when he bought his first motorcycle – an Ormonde – a couple of years later he literally did not know of another private motorcyclist in his home county!

Ixion contributed to The Motor Cycle until his death in 1961, but that was just a part of his activities, because – as is now well-known – he was actually the Reverend (later Canon) Basil Henry Davies. Originally a Lancastrian, he studied theology at Oxford before being ordained in 1903, and began writing about motorcycling at about the same time. He served in parishes in London, Northampton and County Durham (where he had an enormous congregation spread over four different churches) before health concerns caused a move to a quieter parish in Cornwall in 1916.

So we have a priest who wrote about motorcycles under a pen name, but Ixion, aka Basil Davies, was a lot more than that. He enlisted during the Great War, for instance, naturally choosing to join the mechanically advanced Royal Flying Corps. He doesn't specify the nature of his service in the book, in which he modestly sticks to motorcycling matters, but in everyday life he spread his interests far and wide, and besides his journalistic and priestly duties he somehow found time to write knowledgeable books about bridge and cricket.



Roy Poynting has been a regular contributor to *The Classic MotorCycle* since 1995 when he entered and won a writing competition. A veteran of many restorations, he continues to be an enthusiastic rider.

He married in about 1907 and the couple raised six children, an activity many would have found onerous enough without all the other distractions!

But it's motorcycling that most concerns both us and Ixion, and – with an in-joke that proves his pioneering credentials – he cheekily slid a photograph of one B H Davies with his 1903 Excelsior into the 'Cavalcade'. Basil Davies was President of the Northamptonshire Motorcycle Club during his time there, and by 1904 he was on the Committee of both the Auto Cycle Club and the Motor Cycling Club – famous for organising endurance events like the Lands End and Edinburgh Trials still operating today. He also took over editorship of the MCC Gazette and was personally involved in the foundation of both the Scottish Six Days Trial and what would evolve into the International Six Days Trial.

Ixion was a great believer in long distance trials – which he emphasises were more a test of rider and machine stamina than riding skill at this time – and his friendship with Triumph designer Mauritz Schulte led in 1906 to him setting a distance record of nearly 1300 miles in six days on a Triumph single-speeder. Probably out of loyalty to Schulte, Ixion doesn't dwell on the engine troubles and frame breakage that forced abandonment of an initial attempt on the fifth day, but there could be no better proof of his extraordinary enthusiasm and endurance than immediately following this failure with the successful record bid.

The heart problems which ended Ixion's ecclesiastical career in 1940 also finished competitive outings like that, but they didn't slow him down, and besides penning his 'Occasional Notes' right to the end, his contributions to *The Motor Cycle* included road tests, reports on sports events both home and abroad, and annual 'What I Rode' articles.

I originally intended this article to focus on the Cavalcade of Motorcycling itself, but the man aptly described by a biographer as the 'World's First Motor Cycle Diarist' turned out to be as interesting as his book, and it will take another column to do justice to what the late Bob Currie aptly described as the 'Wit and Wisdom of Ixion'. End

"Ixion was a lot more than a priest who wrote about motorcycles under a pen name"



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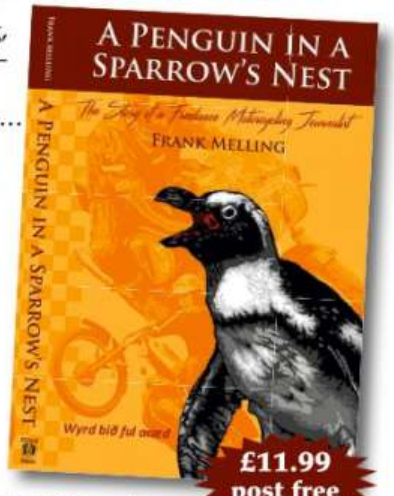
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Show times

The tide has turned, as the traditional static motorcycle show evolves.

This year father's day coincided with a local outdoor car and motorcycle show. Ever ready to press home any advantage that I can when it comes to going to shows, I asked my lads to accompany me to it as my father's day treat.

Local vehicle shows such as this one very often benefit a charity so as a result I try to be sweet and positive about them but I'm particularly grumpy today so I am going to pull no punches. On the upside, the show offered free public entry. The downside was that you certainly got what you paid for.

To say that I've seen better in a supermarket car park is an exaggeration but it wasn't far from the mark. I am aware that the all-encompassing term 'classic' has differing meanings to different people but there are limits; frankly if I want to see nearly new Triumphs, Yamahas and BMWs, I'll wander across to the local dealership and have a browse around their second-hand showroom.

I know people are proud of what they own and enjoy sharing their good fortune with others, but they really ought to make some effort to present what they own in a pleasing way. For instance, one of the exhibitors hadn't made the effort to take their (ironically, quite early and nice) motorcycles off the trailer, while others had seemingly mistaken the show for the local car park abandoning their machines with a pair of crash helmets padlocked to the seat and jackets draped over the handlebars.

Previously, I would not have advocated such Draconian measures as invitation-only events, but thinking about it this approach does have merits, although I do appreciate it's a shed-load of work. But when it works, it works really well. Some years ago I was lucky enough to be contacted by the organisers of another car and motorcycle show held at a local stately home that raised money for a good cause. This strictly was by invitation only and was organised by a chap who was firm but fair. On the day, no matter what they were riding or driving, if the person didn't have the required invite they were politely directed to the public car park.



Jerry Thurston bought his first vintage motorcycle when he was 17. For a time he was *The Classic MotorCycle* advertising manager. Now 30 years on from buying his first old bike, Jerry still owns and loves them and is especially fond of fast, noisy flat-trackers.

"The organiser picked his exhibits carefully. The result was an eclectic mix"

Some years I had an invitation, other times I didn't. As a result, if the valued communication dropped through the letterbox I couldn't wait to go. Partly because it made me feel special, but more because I knew that I would have a great time, this because, without exception, everything there interested me. The organiser didn't just invite the great and the good, he picked his exhibits carefully. Condition and rarity were important to him but above all he went for public interest. His thinking was that if people had to pay to come and see the exhibits, they had better like what was on offer.

If he thought that the public might like to see what you owned an invitation to attend was warmly extended. The result was an eclectic mix; 1970s mopeds stood alongside veteran tricycles, which in their part, jostled for position along with racing machines and vintage thumpers.

When our chap died a few years ago, the format of the show changed – the new organiser decided they would broaden its appeal and remove the invitation restriction. Ironically, the result was the opposite of what they hoped for and within a couple of years the show had withered and died.

Most shows have a booking in system – surely therefore having some sort of eligibility criterion to eliminate the unwanted is the way to go. If somebody tries to enter something that isn't in the spirit of the event they can be sent a polite refusal or if you can't stand telling people no, a note telling them that they have made the 'reserve list' may suffice. When the entrants arrive a polite marshal can then help them display their machine in the most advantageous manner.

But if you really want a show that will pique the public's imagination and bring in the cash be it for charity or business profit, live action has to be the way to go. One only has to look at the success of the Goodwood events to realise that they have got it right. Incredibly strict eligibility criterion and those who attend are encouraged to demonstrate their vehicles in as spirited manner as possible. The success of Goodwood has spawned several very successful lookalike events such as the Cholmondeley Pageant of Power and to a lesser extent the Sywell classic, where the mile-long runway at the historic aerodrome allows owner/riders to really give their machines a workout much to the delight of the crowd who sniff the air like Bisto-kids as the aroma of Castrol R drifts across the site. The old order it appears is changing and I for one am jolly glad it is.

End

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Marque of distinction

GREEVES

Bert Greeves came to motorcycle manufacture comparatively late, having established his business immediately postwar making the once-common-to-British-roads Invacar. Bert's motorcycles were uniquely identifiable because of their trademark alloy I-beam front 'downtube' (sic) made in-house at the company's foundry. Greeves' undoubted contribution to the world of off-road motorcycling was his pioneering use of light two-stroke machines heralding the Japanese revolution which was to follow a couple of decades later.

Words: JERRY THURSTON

Scottish

TOP CHOICE



The Greeves' trials machine, named after the legendary six days trial, was a ground-breaker. In trials – like motocross – the writing was on the wall for the big four-strokes as the lightweight brigade got its act together. Although the tiddlers were decried at first, it wasn't long before competitors realised that even with the frugal power available light weight was a huge advantage. Like almost all Greeves' models barring the late motocross machines, the Scottish followed the traditional Greeves' pattern with a leading link fork, I-beam frame and familiar Villiers' motor.

What to pay?

Although the gearing on a trials machine is off-road oriented, they can make a decent and different road machine with a few tweaks. A Scottish could be a great budget machine for the impecunious enthusiast; we spotted a project at £1995, plus another ready to go at £2999.

£ £ £ £ £

Roadster single



In comparison with the good-looking competition machines, the Greeves single-cylinder roadster was still slightly clumsy looking. Not that clumsy though; with its smart blue paint it knocked spots off contemporaries such as Francis-Barnett and James and, more to the point, had road manners to match. On the minus side, it ran the evergreen Villiers' single-cylinder motor, giving it honest, if unremarkable, power output.

What to pay?

If you desire a Villiers-powered 1950s/60s motorcycle this has to be the one to look out for. The sports version with the alloy mudguards is a nice-looking machine – there are a few advertised at circa £3000 all (at least on the face of it) tidy and apparently ready to ride.

£ £ £ £ £

Sports Twin



The 250cc version of Greeves roadster used the Villiers' parallel twin-cylinder motor for a good dollop more grunt than its one-pot sister, though it wasn't as good looking, particularly in later form, as its single sister. Clunky styling cues and attempts to make the styling a la mode makes them (at least to our eyes) even more uncomfortable. All this can be forgiven firstly because they were a product of their time but more because of their sweet handling.

What to pay?

Historics at Brooklands achieved £4200 for a Sports Twin. Expensive? Not when you realise it was Bert Greeves' own machine and has impeccable provenance as the factory's development and publicity machine. Pre-sale this machine was estimated at £2500 to £3000, which one must assume to be the sort of money a 'less-qualified' twin might achieve.

£ £ £ £ £

Hawkstone



Scrambles (or motocross as it later became known) was once dominated by heavy-duty four-stroke machines. But thanks to Greeves' persistence, the Hawkstone (named after the track in Shropshire) through a programme of development became the bike to beat. Its – and other two-strokes – success eventually meant the sport changed, becoming dominated by the light and powerful two-stroke, a fact that cannot be entirely disassociated from the development of the expansion chamber exhaust in the mid-1960s, too.

What to pay?

These are difficult to value. Essentially they are display only unless you wish to become involved in the classic motocross movement. Ironically, the less original they are, the more money may be asked, as the owner of a competitive machine with a plethora of modifications will look to recoup investment. £2995 will buy you a later 360cc model – expect a small premium on the better-known Hawkstone.

£ £ £ £ £

Silverstone



On the face of it, the Silverstone looked every inch the racing motorcycle, with the I-beam downtube extending into stiff wrap-around engine plates, glass-fibre tank and humped seat unit. Looks can be deceptive. In period it was somewhat let-down by the power-plant. Once sufficient grunt had been obtained through the use of the works developed barrel and porting arrangements, it would sorely tax the poor little Villiers bottom end. Today, thanks to the tenacity of kart racers who refused to let the Villiers go and continued the bottom-end development, the Silverstone can be built into a potent 'vintage' racer or reliable parade bike.

What to pay?

Surprisingly, four Silverstones of varying specifications are being offered for sale. Conditions have ranged from ready to race fully competitive, through to used for demonstrations to an unmolested example. All have one thing in common… No price. In 2014, a very nice-looking example fetched £4800 at auction. We would suspect that price to be holding today.

End

£ £ £ £ £



Sketchboo

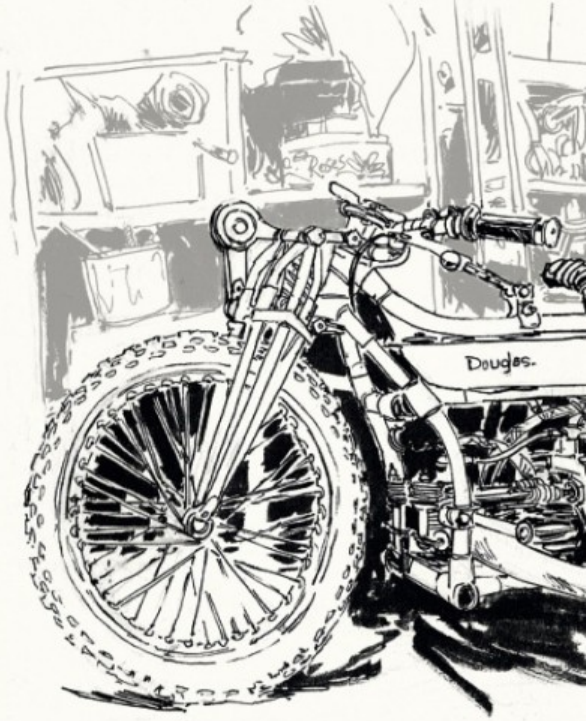
Motorcycles, seen through the

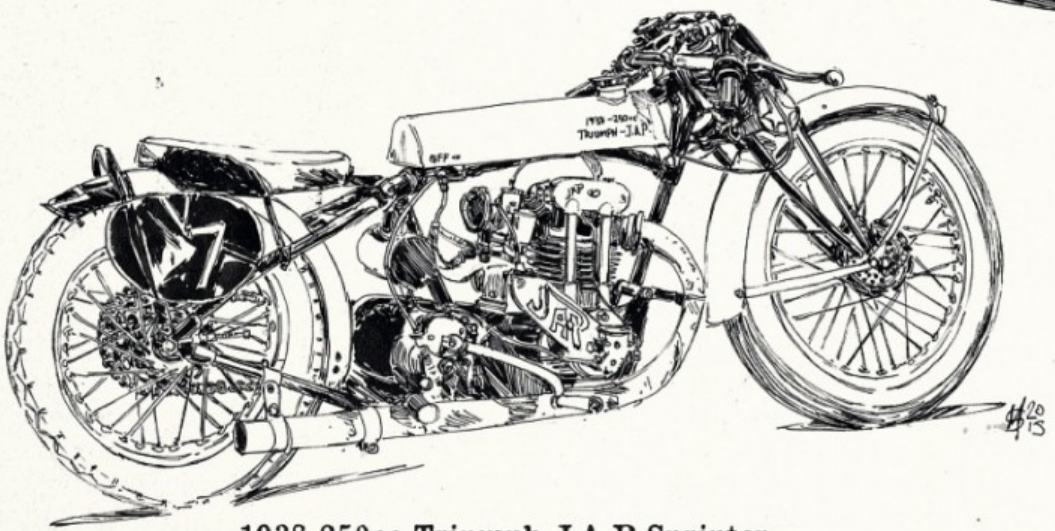
Sketching

This month I had the privilege to visit Henry Body to sketch and t
man himself. Henry's most recent motorcycle achievements have been on his 1
mile, at 115mph. Henry has an incredible history of motorcycle competition and e
glimpse of what Henry has achieved and

1930 Dixon Red Devil

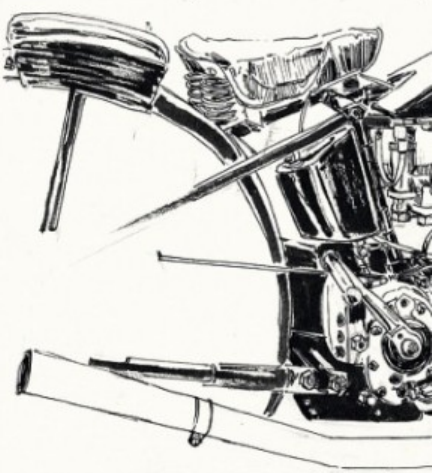
In the 1920s Australians were altering Douglas RA models to be run on the dirt tracks. After the first UK dirt track race of any significance on 19th Feburary 1928 at High Beech, Epping, Douglas was the first to offer a production dirt track motorcycle, in July of that year. In 1930 Douglas built around 12 Dixon Red Devil machines for the Red Devils team. Freddie Dixon was one of the major engine tuners and developers of the day and in the early 1930s he was working for Douglas at their Kingswood plant. Freddie's brother Bert Dixon ran the Red Devils speedway team for whom the Red Devil machines were made. This short wheel based speedway machine was specially developed for the team by his brother. Not only was the wheelbase shortened, the barrels were reduced to square dimensions (68 x 68) giving it a shorter stroke and in turn a higher revving engine. In 1932 there was a major fire at Kingswood which ultimately caused Douglas to go bankrupt and in turn stopped the development of their speedway machines. This particular example was dismantled, put into boxes and hidden away before World War II, and so was saved. Henry bought it in 1965 and raced it in





1938 250cc Triumph J.A.P. Sprinter

As well as sprinting the Douglas, Henry started racing this 250cc special in 2002. Between 2002 and 2009 Henry ran this sprinter with a 350cc J.A.P. engine. The bike was then run again in 2012 with a 250cc Velocette engine. In its latest incarnation, which Henry only started sprinting in 2015, it runs a 250cc J.A.P. The engine was once owned by Peter Ferbrache, and was occasionally run in an Ariel for road racing so that he could enter 250cc events. Engines would be swapped at the meetings so that he could take part in more than one category. Henry has inserted a curved top tube into the Tiger 70 frame (chosen for its light weight) so that he can fit a 500cc engine into it if need be. Peter Ferbrache, sometimes known as 'Fluebrush' due to his moustache, worked for J.A.P. and went on to race works Nortons. On June 25th 1960 Ferbrache was killed in a crash on a 350cc A.J.S. 7R at Assen during the Dutch TT. Henry has achieved a 15.31 second run at 84mph on this sprinter, and is continually making adjustments to get the best out of this special.



1928 OK Supre

Believed to be used by Frank
OK Supreme was acquired by
It was fitted with knobbly tyre
for grass track racing. Longma
circa 1926 and so when OK S
them he insisted that the ma
Rudge gearbox, reckoning the th
OK machines were nowhere ne
like to say that the OK Supreme
won the Lightweight TT on but h
of the bikes he used, due to it

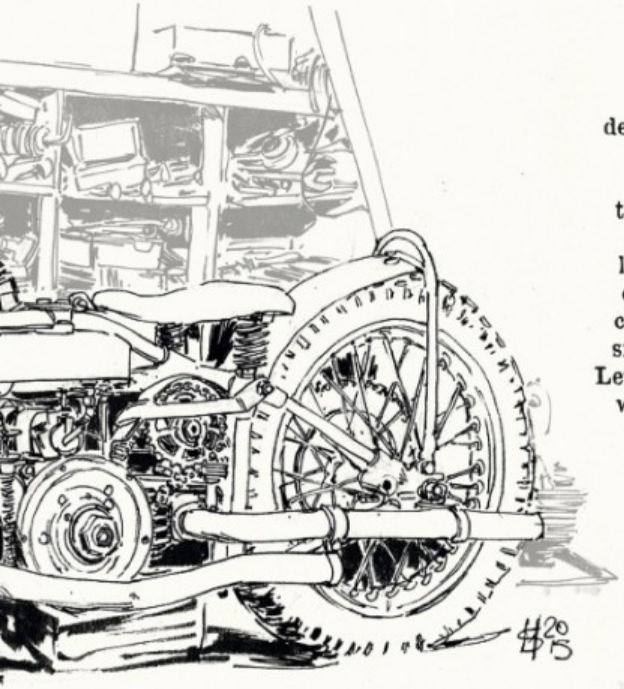
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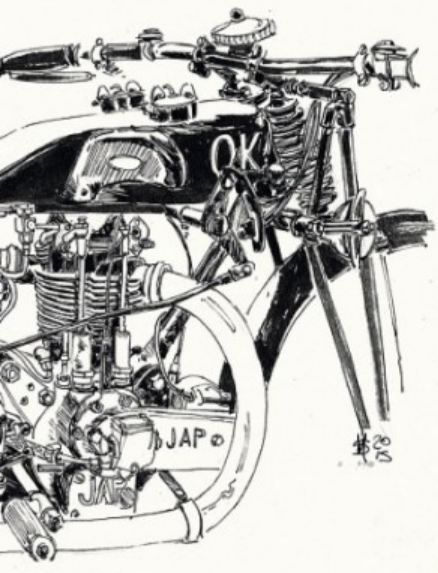


at Henry's

alk motorcycles. Henry is 87 years old and "still here" to quote the
928 Douglas sprinter - his fastest time to date is 12.16 seconds on the quarter
ngineering. Talking to him about the motorcycles featured I have only had a small
l his knowledge on historic motorcycles.

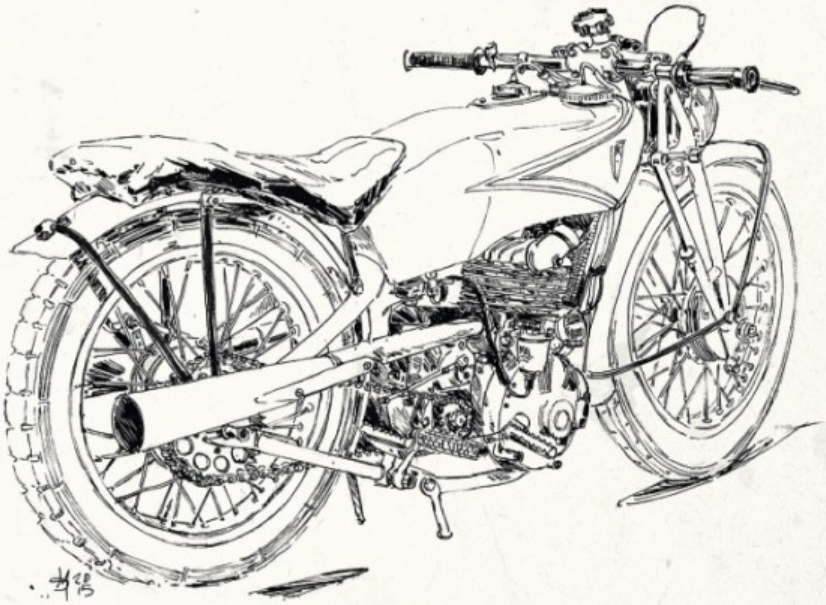


demonstration events round the country in the late 1970s. Henry has had the dirt track bug for a long time - as a child he would build and race cycle speedway bikes on a track on his father's land and compete against local teams. Henry's earliest memory of riding a motorcycle was at 10 years old. He and his brothers had an old Levis two stroke which they got from the local motorcycle man Bill Fear. The cable to the carburettor was so bad it eventually broke. Henry and his brothers solved the problem by sticking a cork in the top of the carb and setting the needle to full throttle. Putting a small amount of fuel in the tank they would get the bike going and ride the Levis round and round until it either ran out of fuel or they fell off - a perfect way to get used to riding speedway motorcycles. In 1978 Henry rode a dirt track Douglas at Eastville, Bristol in the 50 years of Douglas Dirt Track Motorcycles celebration, where he won the Silver Helmet.



eme TT Racer

Longman during the 1928 TT, this
Henry from Cornwall in the 1970s.
es at the time as it was being used
n had raced works Rudge machines
upreme signed him up to ride for
chine be fitted with a four speed
ree speed Burman units fitted to the
ar as good. Henry said he wouldn't
vas the actual bike Longman actually
as every reason to believe it was one
being fitted with a Rudge gearbox.



1936 DKW 250cc Racer

This genuine works DKW was found in Germany by Norman Webb who travelled with the Continental Circus in the 1950s, riding 125 MVs. Norman would regularly deal in motorcycles that he found whilst travelling in Europe and the UK, constantly trading in desirable machines. Henry bought the DKW from Norman in 1956. When Henry took delivery of the machine it had been involved in a crash and the magneto casing was badly damaged. Henry recast the casing himself by making the mould from scratch and casting it in aluminium using melted down pistons and other bits of aluminium he could find. Ewald Kluge won the lightweight TT on a DKW in 1938. Henry delighted in telling me that it was the only motorcycle to run on the Island that could be heard across the water in Blackpool. More and more, louder machines are unable to run at events due to noise regulations meaning that they just lay dormant in collections or get run at events with more lenient regulations, which are few and far between. It's a shame that historic machines such as this aren't allowed to run due to legislation, by doing this the physical experience of motoring history is being lost.



You were asking

Your queries resolved with Richard Rosenthal

Can you help with military shots?





Above: The lighting kit and horn suggest this machine may have been seconded into the military.

Right: Pair of Triumph singles, in 1916.

This pair of tiny military scene photographs surfaced recently. They are similar to others published in the column and give another chance for us to appreciate happenings a century ago for motorcycle riders. Information supplied with the pictures implies they were pre-action shots taken in 1915 at a training camp to the west of London.

The 348cc twin cylinder fore and aft Douglas, with its huge bulb horn and generous acetylene headlight, looks a civilian mount, which was either bought by or seconded to the military. It bears the Hertfordshire registration mark AR 6586. Considering its light build and the appalling conditions under which many military machines were used, it is a wonder any Dougies survived, but survive they did, proving what tough little machines the Bristol maker built.

Both machines in the original smaller image are Triumphs, with the model in the background the famous 'Trusty' 550cc Model H with three-speed Sturmey-Archer handchange gearbox, chain primary and belt final drive. I found it difficult to make out detail of the machine to the fore in the original 2x1in photograph but it may all be clearer by the time the reprographics team has been at work on it – however, the machine is likely to also be a Model H, possibly the primary drive cover is just visible behind the rider's boot. It could be a 550cc 4hp Type A Roadster with free engine facility, but my money is on the Model H theory.

Lightweight James frame

Can you please identify this James frame for me?

Alan Turner, email on behalf of Gef, Australia

Identifying lightweight frames such as this example can be difficult, as many makers bought their lug or frame kits from the same source – for example, Sun Cycle and Fittings. Therefore, there are similarities, which will be found on smaller-sized machines from differing makers.

There are many features, including the seat mounts and three pairs of engine mounts that are correct for lightweight James machines such as the military ML (clockwork mouse) and postwar civilian ML. However, the fact the lower rear fork rails are brazed up rather than bolted seem against this, which leads me to think it may be a frame from an earlier Comet that in some years was the same as the Cadet frame.

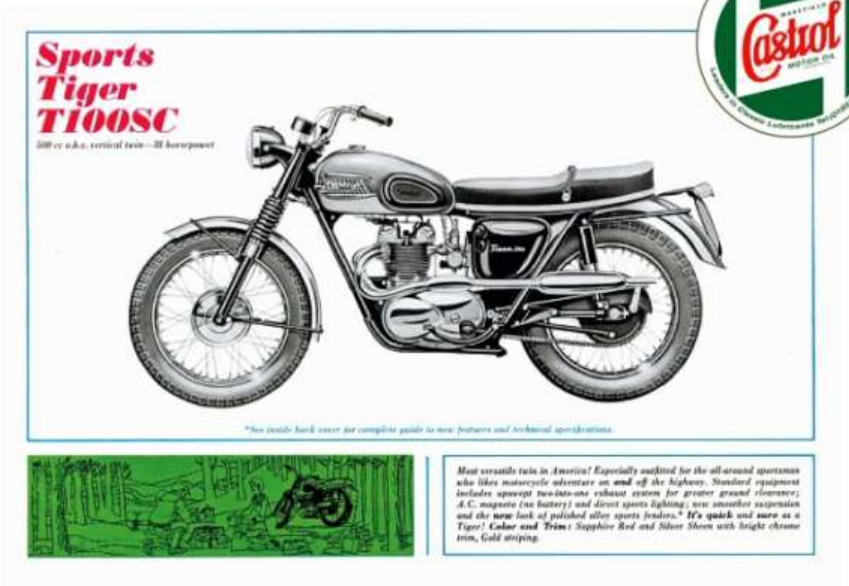
Top and bottom of the above waffle is that I'm not certain and no doubt many of you will come to the rescue – or indeed shoot me down in flames!





Any ideas on what model of James this frame is from? Richard reckons Comet...

Triumph T100 identification



Recently, I bought a Triumph Tiger 100 bearing the matching frame and engine numbers of T100SC H40XXX. Can you tell me what the letters SC stand for? It has been suggested this machine was imported into South Africa for use by the police or military. Can you confirm this?

Roy Hayter, email, South Africa.

The letters SC after T100 inform me that Triumph, Roy, is a Street Competition version of the Tiger 100, which was developed for sale in America. Another variant for the USA was the T100SS (Street Scrambler). The T100SC was introduced by the Meriden maker for the 1962 season and many sources state it was dropped after 1965, but past research leads me to believe they were marketed in 1966 and possibly 1967, too. The matching frame and engine numbers from this machine confirm it was built during the 1966 season.

SC specification machines were supplied new with energy transfer (ET) ignition, high handlebars, small two-gallon fuel tank (evidence suggests a few, possibly early examples, were supplied with 2.6-gallon petrol tanks, which is still considerably smaller than the standard T100 3.5-gallon fitment), lowered gearing, stiffening strut to frame, tank strap to secure the petrol tank, and competition (trials) tyres, often 3.25x19 front and 4.00x18 rear. While the rear tyre size remains constant, there were variances in front tyre size including 3.50x19, while one reader was sure his was supplied with options of 2.75 or 3.00x21, but this may have been to special order.

While many Triumphs were employed by police forces around the world, the T100SC doesn't spring to mind as an obvious choice, but considering the terrain some officers in South Africa encountered, the use of SC models with knobbly tyres and lowered gearing seems sound. Can any T100 models specialists confirm either way, please?

Wiring direct lighting

I'm about to connect the lights to the lighting coils of our 1926-28 175cc Motobecane. It has separate magneto for the ignition and an attached dynamo, which I'm told is for direct lighting. We don't know if the dynamo is original or something added later as it looks more like a larger style cycle dynamo, but driven by a rubber band. Will this dynamo be positive or negative earth? In what sequences do I connect the lights? Do I need a switch? And can the dynamo be used to charge a battery?

Marcelo de Juan, email.

Our archive holds no details for vintage Motobecanes, but it is likely the dynamo component will follow conventional form. Unless the 'dynamo' you have has a commutator fitted, it is likely your generator is actually producing alternating current, as for example a Villiers flywheel magneto/generator or a Lucas alternator. As such this alternating current will be fine for your proposed direct lighting system, but will be unable to charge a battery without rectification.

Unless there is a method of easily disconnecting the drive to the generator, you will need to fit an on/off switch into the wiring system to turn the lights on and off. It doesn't matter an iota whether the generator you have is intended for either positive or negative earth systems, although the likelihood is its negative earth. Instead, regard the single wire from the lighting coil you have described to me as the 'feed' wire and connect this to the on/off switch. From the opposite pole of the switch, connect the feed to your lights.

Here lies a conundrum, which without trying or with more information I don't know the answer. With many direct lighting systems one connects the front and rear lights in parallel – that is, a separate wire to each light from the light switch (even if both are connected to same terminal as is the case with simple on/off moped/autocycle type switches). But some early systems including the vintage Coventry-Eagle lurking in our garage (with 196cc Villiers engine and the claimed 4.5 volt lighting coil system) requires its lights wired in series. That is, run a single wire to the headlight feed pole and then a wire from the headlight earth pole to the rear light as its feed and then earth only the rear light to the machine.

If your lights earth independently (e.g. through their body) then they need wiring in parallel, if not and you want to wire in parallel earth each light separately, or if you want to try the wiring in series proceed as above. It has been discovered with the resident Coventry-Eagle brighter lights result when wired in series rather than parallel, but don't expect miracles! This is only the difference between dim and very dim...

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YWA

Registration mark woes

Having just completed the rebuild of a 350cc 1934 BSA R34, I now need to either save its original registration number or get an age-related one. I'm not happy with the current age related numbers and I'm not satisfied with the advice you gave me to seek guidance and secure the number through an appropriate DVLA-approved club or body, as all these groups demand fees for the paperwork and also expenses if they need to view the vehicle. This is profiteering.

Now I've gathered a 'certain car club' has been pulled up over irregularities and more than 100 vintage/classic car owners have had their awarded age-related numbers suspended until they can revalidate their application. If I do have to follow your advice and pay up, I need to be sure either a saved original or age-related number is secure and permanent to my BSA.

Name, email and surface mail address supplied.

Notes:

- *Normally I never lecture, but instead try to assist. In this case, though, both my emailed reply to you 'X' and this YWA response does in places takes the form of lecture, as you have not only hit a nerve here, but also I know from your series of long emails to me you've done the same with the officials of at least two long-established clubs, who are doubtless doing their best to help you.*
- *You named the concerned car club and you are correct in your identification of it, but I'm sure efforts are being made in all directions, including legally, to resolve the situation, so the words 'certain car club' have replaced the club's name. Also, as none of us onlookers know even half the story and in my case much less, we're in no position to point fingers or indeed commiserate with the situation.*
- *This is one of three similar enquires which have arrived at the YWA column this year. However, 'oil poured on troubled water' helped with the other two.*





Various age-related number sequences have been issued over the years; these are just two examples. Another commonly seen is the BF series.

While it has in the past been possible to reclaim an original registration mark using evidence such as a surviving vehicle tax disc or even an old MoT test certificate, this is no longer the case. Instead, the applicant needs to supply evidence that includes the chassis or frame number of the vehicle, e.g. an old-style log book or archived local licensing authority records, but only if they detail chassis/frame numbers – many don't.

The DVLA holds and updates a 'List of vehicle owners clubs' (V765/1) which it approves and registers to process such enquiries. These clubs are also approved by DVLA to process age-related registration mark enquiries. Approved clubs validate their situation with the DVLA annually and DVLA, of course, has the authority to remove any clubs from its list which have habitually not followed guidelines.

While you 'X' feel these approved clubs should offer their services for free and any charges represent profiteering, many (including me) consider the services provided by clubs thorough, responsible and the charges modest. Also, if a club official travels a round trip of 60 or 70 miles to inspect your vehicle, it seems entirely reasonable he or she is entitled to accept travel and other expenses and it is only right the applicant should fund these. The re-allocation of an original registration mark or the allocation of an age-related mark will enhance the value of your BSA in the UK to a degree far more than the expenses you quoted and are reluctant to pay. Many clubs and/or their officials don't have huge disposable resources therefore I (we) am (are) happy to fund as required and pleased to accept their help and advice.

As vehicle owners, we don't own their UK registration marks – DVLA is, in effect, the custodian of these. But once allocated to a vehicle, whether originally, via an age-related award, cherished mark scheme or other, only extremely rarely does the DVLA remove or suspend its use in relation to a specific vehicle. But it can occur, as alluded to in the original enquiry.

My son Peter has applied for three age-related DVLA registration marks over the past year. In addition to required photographs, form completion, valid insurance, MoT test if required etc and validating of frame numbers, as the makers of all three machines no longer exist two pieces of documentary evidence were needed to tie the vehicle to its claimed year of manufacture. Club officials will advise. We found DVLA helpful although on one occasion our application was briefly refused, because one piece of the required personal evidence was forgotten by Peter. Once supplied, that application too was also successful.

While some UK age-related registration marks may seem 'nicer' than others, surely the fact that an application is successful and the vehicle's owner/custodian can legally take to the roads is the satisfactory conclusion.

Toothed drive belt life

Literature received with a belt-drive primary drive kit implies these toothed belts have a limited life, quoted in this case as three years, but gives no indication of how much longer the life is if the machine is used in summers only and is off the road for the winter months. I'm sure makers want to sell new belts, hence the advice. But what is the real life of a belt?

Will Hardy, email, USA.

Sorry Will, the likelihood is the maker's recommended life is still three years, even if the machine is rarely used or indeed run every day. Some sources have stated in the past the life of a toothed drive belt should be measured from its date of manufacture, not its date of installation. Expert advice on this is welcomed by the YWA column.

On fitting a well-known belt drive kit and clutch a few years ago, the maker/supplier's advice was very clear on this matter – fit a new belt every three years. And the friend/owner has followed this advice rigidly over the past decade. Advice from one of the major toothed drive-belt makers in the UK at the time was to follow supplied guidelines, as while some belts for road vehicles in specific applications may have a life of three years or 50,000km (which ever expires first) others may have a life of five years and 70,000km or even more.



Belt primary drives do have a lifespan, so observe the maker's guidelines.

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Calthorpe Ivory

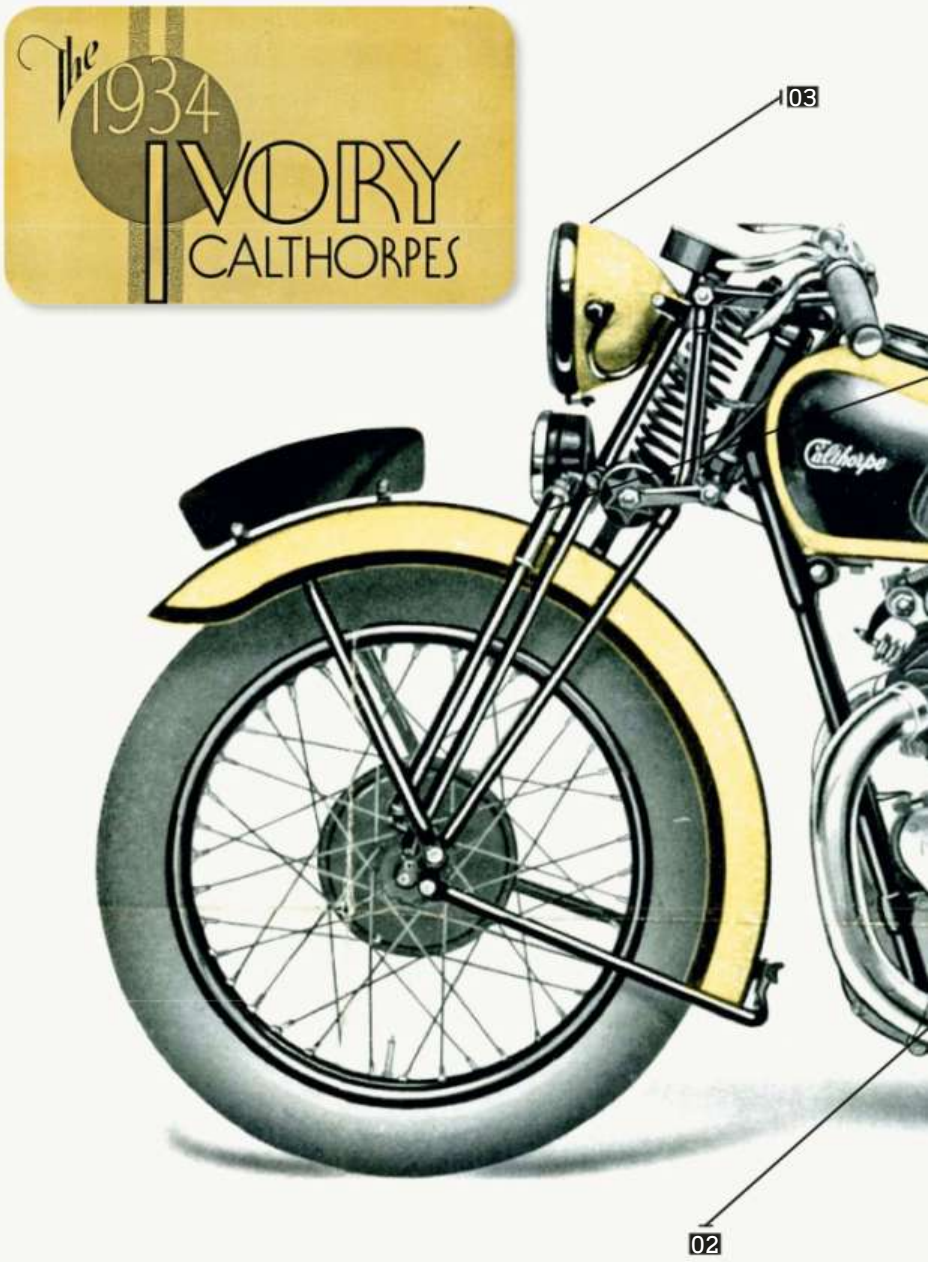
THE SPECIALIST

Dick Weekes has been a Calthorpe enthusiast for many years and for much of that time has been sharing his knowledge about the marque and its machines, so he was the obvious person to approach for help with this restoration guide. As he warned, the history of the Ivory model is far from straightforward. More detailed knowledge can be found on the internet at: calthorpe.info/

MODEL HISTORY

Calthorpe had enjoyed mixed fortunes as a bicycle, motorcycle and car manufacturer, but the launch of the Ivory at the end of the 1920s boded well for the future. Available at a very reasonable price and powered by the maker's new 350cc engine, the model was favourably received, although the all-over ivory colour scheme raised traditionalists' eyebrows. The Ivory name was also applied to the later 250cc Minor (in both two- and four-stroke versions) and the 500cc Major models. Along with the 350cc Junior, the machines went through many detail changes. Unfortunately, these were the years of the Great Depression and the development programme was dictated more from the accountants' office than that of the engineers.'

The models on offer varied from year to year, most years there were also Competition variants, usually with no lights, upswept exhausts and perhaps even the optional factory-tuned engine. Enclosed valve gear appeared on 1936 models. In 1937, south London dealer Pride & Clarke had exclusive rights to sell the Red Calthorpe versions. Rationalisation dictated that 350 and 500cc models used the same cycle parts and bottom-end assemblies. Unfortunately, even this new arrangement could not save Calthorpe. Just prewar, Bruce Douglas, of the eponymous Bristol-based manufacturers, bought the liquidated company, but the Ivory name never re-appeared.



01

Engine

The first engine, the 350, began with 74x81mm bore and stroke dimensions, the 250 was 67x70mm for both two- and four-stroke versions. The 500 was 85.5x86. In 1937, when the Junior adopted the 500's bottom end, the 350 capacity was achieved with a 72mm cylinder bore. All but the early Minors had overhead-valve, single-cylinder engines of straightforward design. The reservoir for the dry sump lubrication system was initially a separate oil tank, but soon in a compartment within the crankcase casting. Calthorpe tried four different lubrication systems over the years, although the valve gear still depended essentially on oil mist.

A common restoration problem is the oil pump cover on later models, which was made from Mazak and has usually crumbled. There are no spares and replacement involves machining a new one, although it is a fairly straightforward job. The timing side main bearing was a roller as standard, but perceived contemporary knowledge advised fitting a self-aligning ball bearing. Either method is more than adequate for modern use. The drive side mains can be changed for two individual bearings, to replace the now-unobtainable double-row item. The barrels will stand boring out for alternative pistons, while replacement valves and guides should not be a problem.

02

Transmission

The primary chaincase and the gearbox can all suffer if a bike, or its component parts, have been badly stored. Calthorpe fitted Burman and Albion systems. These used different, non-interchangeable primary chaincases. Early versions were pressed steel, after 1931 most bikes use a cast aluminium, three-piece arrangement that might also incorporate a dynamo drive chain. Dick notes that: "Damage is not uncommon and repair can be challenging." Inside, the clutches are adequate and can be overhauled fairly easily. Dick notes the Albion system is virtually unbreakable, but the gear-change is clunky. It has many parts in common with contemporary Royal Enfield transmissions and those are mostly still available – although they are rarely required. The four-speed Burman gearboxes are not quite as tough. Finding the correct bits, which are out there, somewhere, may well be a test of the restorer's patience. Foot change became standard later, but hand change remained an option.

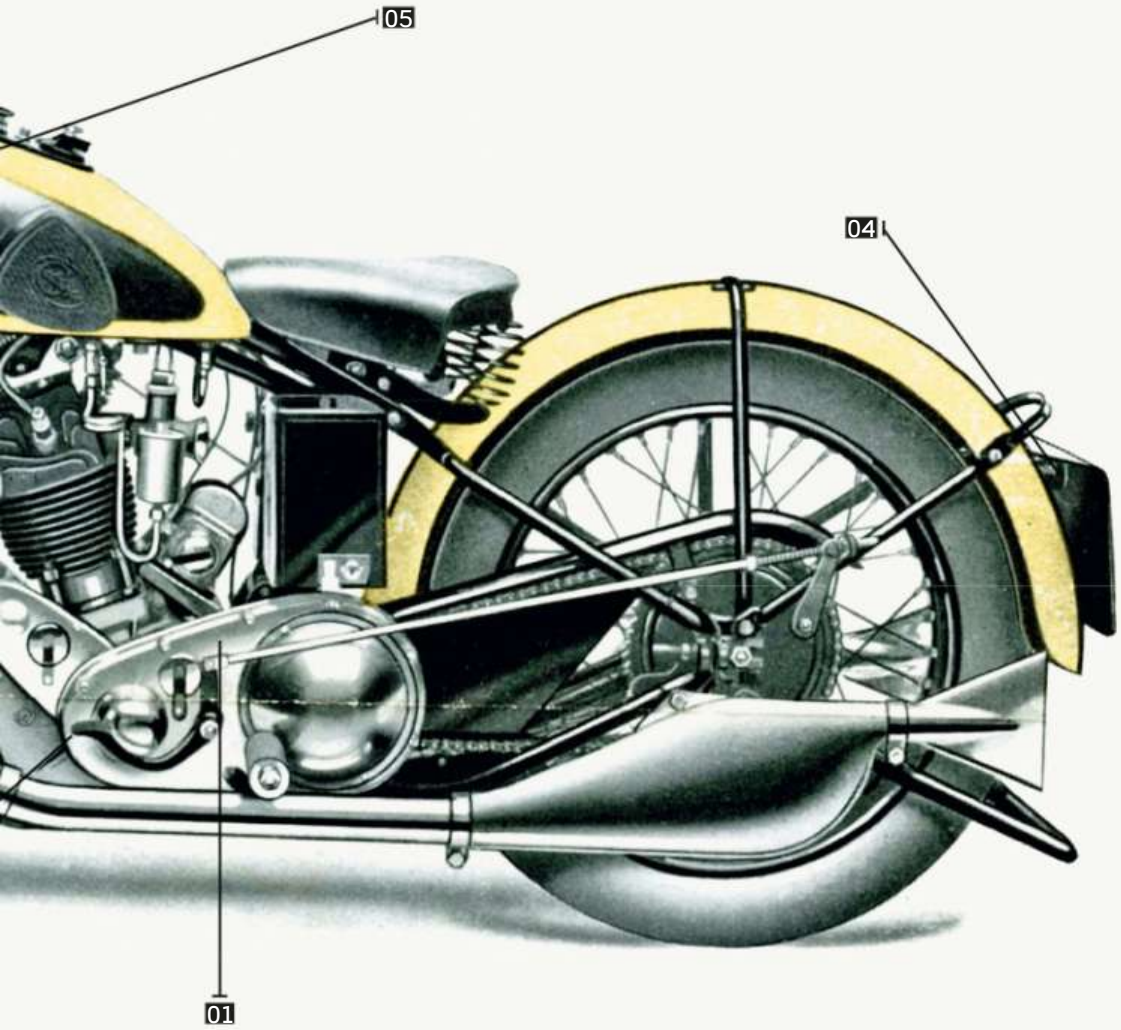
03

Electrics

The electrical systems varied considerably. Some were magneto, some had battery and

Words: ALAN TURNER

1934 IVORY CALTHORPE



coil. Some used Miller, others Lucas components, some variations were listed as official factory options. Magneto or dynamo overhaul is not difficult for those with the appropriate skills. The restorer's main problem is finding someone with those skills. Note that Velocette also used Miller electrics, but some items, such as the rear light, are almost unobtainable.

04

Cycle parts

Whatever the condition of the cycle parts, they will almost certainly have to be restored as few items are ever available. Calthorpe specified heavy-gauge steel, but storage may still have done it no favours. Over the years, petrol tanks increased in capacity and used different mounting methods.

The mudguards, especially the more ornate front, are also peculiar to Calthorpe. The single curvature chainguard is the only part that can be relatively easily re-made. The wheel hubs were bought in from Harwil, later bikes had roller wheel bearings, updating the earlier cup-and-cone arrangement. Either six- or seven-inch brake drums were fitted, varying by model and year. Until the later years, Ivories had tank-top instrument panels; now extremely rare. Around 1935, Calthorpe elected for the Amal 'clean bar system' where control cables were routed through the handlebars. The necessary dedicated levers and internal parts are also very difficult to find.

05

Suspension

With development funds non-existent, Calthorpe never got as far as trying rear suspension. The worst of the bumps were hopefully isolated by a saddle, usually from Terry or Lycett – sometimes depending on which supplier would extend credit to the oft-troubled manufacturer. At the front, with the exception of the early two-strokes, all the bikes used centre-spring Druid girder forks. As ever, these may need expert attention and replacement spindles and critical fasteners should be made from suitable steel and reassembled by someone who knows what they are doing.

PRICING

Calthorpes do not come on the market very often, but given enough patience, a restoration project will eventually turn up. At the top end, a catalogue-correct bike could easily top £10,000. Running, but needing work, will be £4-5000 so a restoration project, with all the critical bits present, could command £2-3000.

IN CONCLUSION

Although Calthorpe made the necessary investment to build its own engines in the 1920s, the lack of money for further development meant the company could not keep pace with the improved performance, or even economy, models being produced by its rival manufacturers.

Factory-fresh Calthorpes were adequately engineered motorcycles, but wartime use and long-term storage means that barn, shed or garage finds will be in poor condition. When considering a restoration project, it is useful to start with something in one, bike-sized piece. As the foregoing has hopefully demonstrated, the evolution of the Ivory is tricky to unravel.

With parts difficult to source, returning a Calthorpe back to the road can be a test of restoration skills, or contacts. By completing the course the end result is a motorcycle that is archetypal early 1930s motorcycling (with the possible exception of that colour scheme).

About half the surviving Calthorpes from the 1930s are 500s, the other half made up about equally of 250 and 350cc models. If you care to add to these numbers, good luck – it's the 21st century's acceptable version of 'ivory' hunting.

End

BUTTERFLIES AND DRUMS

Discuss British-made carburettors and likely as not you'll mention Amal, Villiers and perhaps SU, maybe AMAC or Brown & Barlow... Here's a random selection of some of the many others available pre-1930.

Words and photography: RICHARD ROSENTHAL

Two years ago, our great family friend Phillip 'Hoppy' Hopkins muted an idea for a TCM technical feature – early unusual carburettors. The subject formed the basis of an evening's display and talk by Hoppy and his pal Chris Illman at the Beds Section of the VMCC. Entitled 'Suck' it was to be one of a short series that would include 'squeeze,' 'bang' and 'blow.' Hoppy had an unquenchable thirst for knowledge regarding all things mechanical and lots more besides, and while Chris has a similar appetite, he was also able to rein Phil in to design a super presentation. It was one of the best motorcycling evenings I'd ever attended and we all learnt lots, marvelling at designs ranging from the brilliant to the downright useless.

A few days later, Hoppy handed me a selection of carburettors from his collection of the unusual and bizarre, supplemented by a couple loaned by Chris, with the comment; 'We'll do this together.' We both had visions of endless cups of tea interspersed with photographing these marvels developed by fertile minds a century or so ago, much mirth and more than a little ribbing. In fact, good times that would rub off on you, the reader. Unfortunately, best-laid plans go awry and in this case the wheel really fell off. Phil's wife Monica had died a couple of years earlier and Hoppy, who had been struggling with serious health issues for some decades, quickly took a series of steps down that slippery slope.

The carburettor plan was sidelined, although not forgotten and often discussed, until the corner was rounded into happy days once again. Phil died earlier this summer and now is the time to fulfill his plan, with much of the research culled from his notes and emails. I could never convey Hoppy's enthusiasm for the mechanically bizarre, unusual and of course on occasions staggeringly brilliant – hopefully you can imagine that. And, of course, my thanks to Chris Illman for enthusiastically agreeing to the completion of Phil's idea.

The BAPP carburettor





Starting in 1868 as brass founders, the firm later known as Thomas Bulpitt and Sons, specialised initially in brass castings, pressings and machined items. Later, they branched out into motor accessories making components for motorcycles under the BAPP brands, including BAPP Accessories and the BAPP carburettor. Then they also entered the domestic and commercial catering markets with brands including The Swan Brand, Carlton, Empire, Wikka Ware and more. Under these and other names, they produced a huge range of items ranging from electric kettles and 'Teasmades' to surgical sterilisers and saucepans to colanders via immersion heaters, urns and fish fryers. BSR bought Bulpitt and Sons in 1971 and Moulinex bought Swan Brands in 1989, after which the Bulpitt and Sons Company was dissolved.

At first glance, the BAPP carburettor looks a convincingly conventional slide carburettor in the mould of AMAC or B&B. But look again and you'll discover that instead of a conventional slide, the BAPP has a single cable controlled throttle drum with option of hand lever mounted atop of the mixing chamber operation. Alternative air intake intake comes into play at low throttle settings and fuel metering was controlled by an adjustable needle with its mating needle valve. Kettles proved a better option than car or motorcycle components and the BAPP carburettor was soon dropped as later there were many other motor accessories, including a range of car and motorcycle acetylene lamps.



The Capac Carburettor



Designer Frederick Joseph Gornal successfully applied for his British patent for the carburettor body in 1917, while its float chamber was patented by Charles Noel Storr and Gordon Richards of 115 Southwark Street, London a year later. Although the carburettor bears a London address, 2 Woodstock Street, Mr Gornal was born at Pilling, near Garstang, Lancs, in 1883 and it is known that by 1901 he worked on the family farm. However, the patent documents inform in 1917 Gornal described himself as a motor engineer.

Of butterfly design operated by options of either rod or cable, the Capac has an adjustable needle valve – by spanner – and an airscrew to richen or weaken the fuel mix. The seemingly near-conventional float chamber originally sported a tickler, but there is no choke device unless this was incorporated into the missing air filter or air intake. The subject Capac, an internet buy, delighted Hoppy, who found it fascinating and then declared it useless…

Cox-Atmos

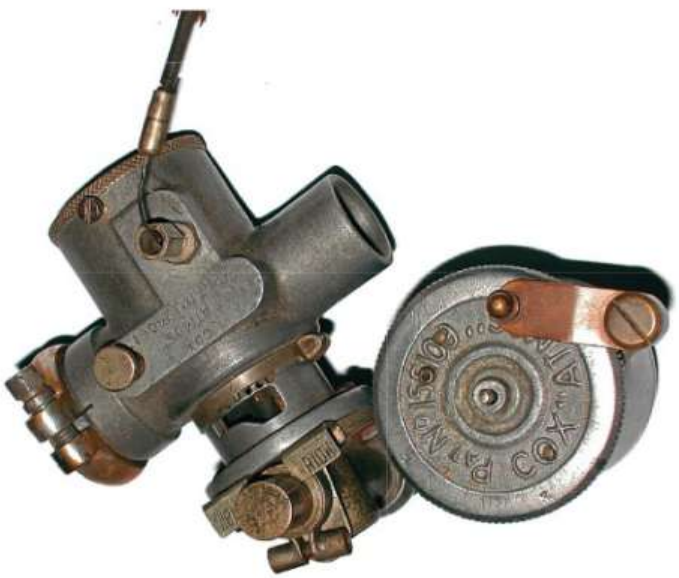
Manufactured by Cox Carburettors of Lower Essex Street, Birmingham, the Cox-Atmos is not only unusual to our eyes but with care it can be made to work well and a later development even removed small amounts of foreign material such as water from the fuel that the rider could later drain off.

Fuel passes into the carburettor via an instantaneously adjustable spring-locked needle. Petrol sprayed into the mixing chamber is mixed with air in three stages – first with a limited volume of high velocity air for a good mix, then with more air via ports in a small mixing chamber and finally in the throttle valve, where it joins the main stream slow velocity air flow for the correct final fuel to air ratio mix.

Members of the press, academic technical boffins and some motorcycle engineers enjoyed good results with the Cox-Atmos, leaving us to wonder why it didn't enjoy a long and profitable life.







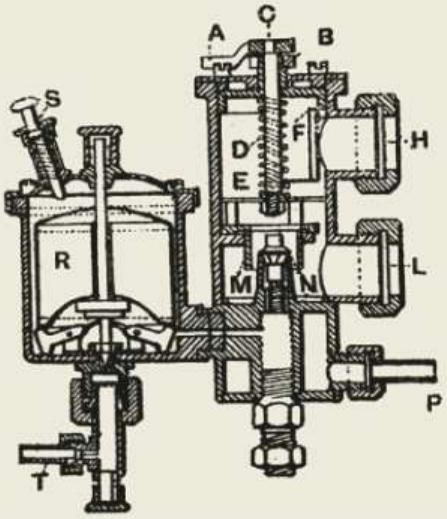
Degory No-Jet

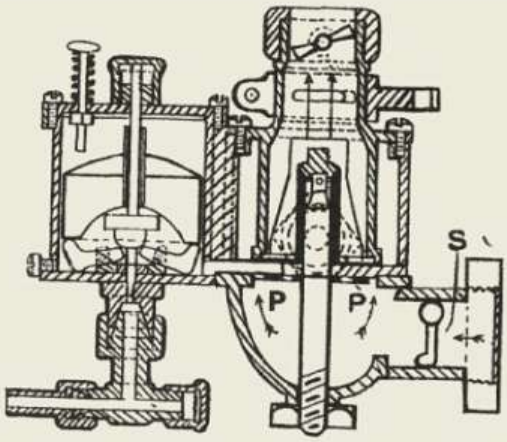
Marketed by the Degory No-Jet Carburettor Co (Section H.14) of 93 Moore Park Road, Fulham, London and displayed at the 1921 Olympia Motorcycle Show, Mr E Degory's design was covered by 'world's patents,' in Mr Degory's words. Glowing advertising copy stated the Degory No-Jet amassed immense enthusiasm among all internal combustion engine users, because 'over and above the immense fuel savings ranging from 15% to 50%, Degory controlled engines were even more wonderfully flexible with better slow running, acceleration, smoothness and silkiness in running were obtained.' Not convinced? Well, not only would the Degory garage fit and tune your new instrument, which was fully guaranteed, but if returned with 15 days customers would receive a full refund less a small mount for expenses. A year later The Motor Cycle stated; 'Very high claims are made for the performance of the Degory carburettor which is of exceedingly simple design.' Apart from its butterfly there was an adjustable fuel metering screw and an airscrew and that was that; other than endless claims of a precise 165 3/5mpg for a Douglas flat twin, 113mpg for a Scott, 93mpg with a Zenith V-twin…



Longuemare

The French-made Longuemare is considered by many to be the great grandad of motorcycle spray carburettors. Fine, except it wasn't the first spray carburettor, nor was the design exclusively for motorcycles, as it was employed on a range of cars, other vehicles and stationary internal combustion engines of the pre-First World War period. In its day the Longuemare was arguably the best design available, employed extensively and progressed vehicles from relying on dangerous surface carburettors to something safer and more dependable, thus the thought of it being the great grandad of motorcycle carburettors perhaps isn't that far off the mark, especially as like many grandparents it was later overtaken by endless precocious youths.

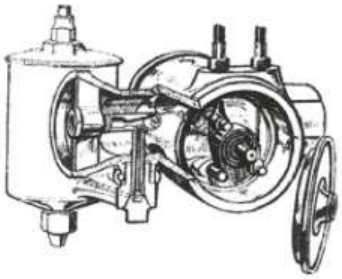




As the sprayer has a nozzle into which a number of slits (usually four or five) were formed, it can be regarded as a multi jet carburettor. With many models air warmed by a so-called 'hot jacket' surrounding the vaporising chamber is drawn through holes in the base of the spraying chamber. The air is then forced through a cone-shaped tube and the maker's catalogues stated that towards the end of this tube 'the air mingles with the petrol vapour.'

Longuemare made a number of models in differing sizes. Of the examples illustrated, the Model B (above right) is less sensitive to varying atmospheric conditions than some siblings and therefore much easier to operate, making it ideal for many road-going motorcycles, for example. The Model E (right) is fussier to use and more affected by atmospheric conditions but in experienced hands it is far more efficient, making it a favourite for the racing and sporting rider.

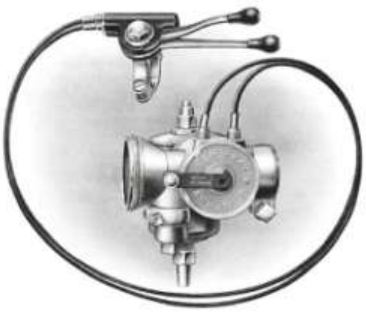
Senspray



Available in a small range of sizes including lightweight and standard, the Senspray Carburettor was the work of the company Charles H Pugh Ltd, Whitworth Works, Tilton Road, Birmingham. Charles Henry Pugh (Pugh and Sons) founded in June 1891 The Whitworth Cycle Company, one of the precursors of Rudge Whitworth Ltd (merged in 1894). The business Charles H Pugh Ltd was continued as a separate concern that remained Birmingham-based to continue the manufacture of cycle frames and other cycle components for Rudge-Whitworth and rival cycle makers as well as general ironmongery manufacture. Later, this work encompassed jobs for the motorcycle industry including Senspray carburettors, which were not only destined for Rudge-Whitworth motorcycles but also for direct sales via the trade to private customers and were on offer to rival motorcycle makers.

Some sources state the name 'Senspray' is derived from 'scent spray' as there are similarities. In basic terms, the Senspray comprises a vaporiser above a single jet in an intake, leading to the air and throttle control drums. In effect, the instrument can be adjusted to vary mixture. In the rich option the carburettor will operate automatically while with the mid-mixture strength option it is semi-automatic, that is it's fine for level running and normal acceleration but the air drum may need controlling with the handlebar lever on climbing steep hills, into strong headwinds and when ridden enthusiastically. The weakest setting will give best economy, but the rider will need to operate both air and throttle levers on the move to get the best mix for every situation, which will, of course, vary due to hills, weather, riding style etc.

THE ADJUSTABLE VAPORISER TYPE OF
"SENSPRAY" CARBURETTER
is made in the following models :—

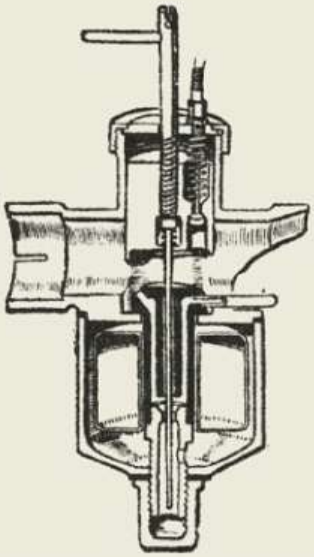


Considerable experience with the Senspray (and then a much less worn example!) fitted to a mid 1920s Rudge informs that in good order they are an able sophisticated sound instrument but heavy wear negates their efficiency, making control difficult...



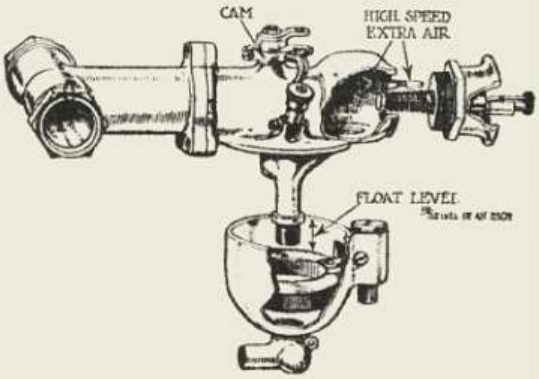
The Mills carburettor

It is considered by some to be light years ahead of rivals and like the Triumph instrument it is outside the remit of this feature, but included by way of comparison. Of true concentric design, the example here employs a single lever above the mixing chamber to raise and lower the needle to richen or weaken the mixture and a cable operated throttle slide. Later, the design was licensed to Villiers, which literally made millions of them with little more than minor variances.



Schebler

Many consider the American designed and built Schebler to be one of the soundest and most robust butterfly throttle carburettors ever made. Despite having experience of working on only one to date, I agree with that thought. Once adjusted it did the job perfectly. Within the mixing chamber is a spray nozzle with adjustable control needle, which is linked to the throttle. Mixture is adjustable while spring tension alteration regulates the air valve. There are also controls for slow running and a knob that shuts the air valve for cold starting. All seemed foreign to my eyes but it worked well so as modern people would say 'end of!'



Vortex

Arguably in this case the man is far more interesting than his Vortex, but carburettors first. Erik Thomas Waterhouse Addyman applied for a patent on his ideas for 'Improvements in carburettors for internal combustion engines' in March 1919. Listing his address as Lonsdale, Dane Bank, Disley, Chester, in December 1919, he became the holder of patent 136,405. He later incorporated his ideas into the illustrated Vortex carburettor. Of vertical rotation drum design, his concept featured a second concentric drum rotating within the larger drum to control the fuel/air mixture throughout the throttle range. Accurately positioned and shaped ports in the drums facilitated the control of air, thus enabling the rider to fine tune the carburettor while underway.

The son of Leeds solicitor and Norwegian Vice Consul (hence Erik rather than Eric) Addyman was born at Starbeck, Harrogate, Yorkshire in 1889 and later trained as an engineer at Kitson's College, Leeds. He took to the air in 1909, being one of the first to fly gliders at Sutton Bank and was a friend of the famous French aviator Louis Bleriot. A keen potholer, he knew the explorer Roald Amundsen, was a failed applicant for Robert Scott's doomed 1911 South Pole expedition and was a reservist for the Irvine/Mallory ill-fated 1923 Mount Everest attempt. During the First World War he researched and assisted with the development of depth charges at the Portsmouth School of Mines, then worked at Arrol Johnston in Dumfries on aero eng d ign where he applied for and was awarded three patents.

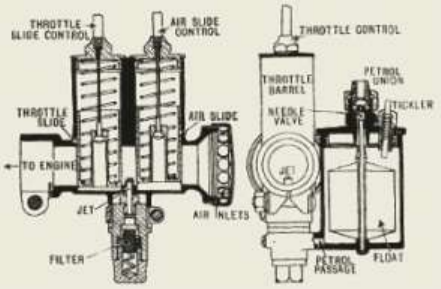
While in Dumfries he met throu his future father in law a young la who became his wife – seemingly the wrong way round, but how it happened! After the war he and his new wife Evelyn moved to Starbeck, while he worked as a railway superintendent and was an early advocate for diesel instead of steam power for trains. Erik was joint founder and first secretary for the Harrogate Aircraft Club and built with others their first club glider, a Dickson Primary, in the clubhouse billiards room. During these postwar years uilt five cars (of which two survived) before usly injured in a gliding accident in 1932, aking both legs and his arm so badly it was mputated. Once sufficiently recovered he resumed glider flying, and went on to design the Zephyr Sailplane in 1933 and the Standard Training Glider the following year. One obituary published after his death in 1963 described him as 'a controversialist in the pleasanter sense.' He loved harassing officials and officialdom through press via the letters pages, at public meetings and of course directly. Hoppy loathed bureaucracy too and certainly would have found a kindred spirit in Erik.

Note: The illustrated Vortex is incomplete. End



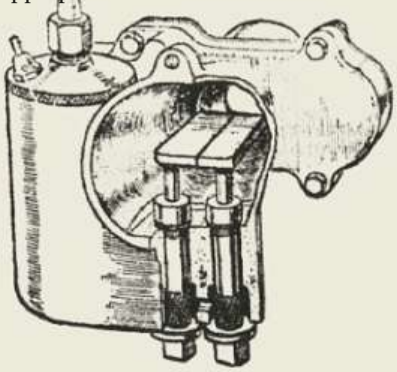
Triumph

Like AMAC, Amal, Mills/Villiers etc, it is not really a subject for this feature but briefly included as it is a double-barrelled slide carburettor with the air slide with chamber in front of the throttle slide and its chamber. A single jet is between the two chambers. And unlike some instruments manufactured by certain rival motorcycle makers, it actually works well.



Wex

A flat slide carburettor comprising a pair of side by side jets located in the air intake, each feeding into a diffuser leading into the mixing chamber. The flat slide travelled across the ends of the diffusers, leaving a clear venturi on full throttle. As an excellent full throttle instrument, it was great for track use and found favour in the 1920s with some Brooklands racers and the like, but it was unhappy at only part open throttle settings, making road work less fun. While adjustments were possible, these were more appropriate for weather variances





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BSA A7SS 1958, 500cc, twin, green, black, show condition, V5C, £4950 Tel. 01672 513827. Wilts



BSA B40 350cc, 1961, fully restored, show condition or ride, new rims, s/spokes, too much to list, £3200 ono; p/x considered Tel. 07443 642408. West Yorks



BSA B40 SS90, 1962, rare, electronic ignition, new battery, new tyres, MoT Aug 2016, vgc, £2750 ono Tel. 01299 270743; 07866 936363. Worcs



BSA BANTAM D7 1962, done about 1400 miles since fitted with all new bearings etc, Rex Caunt electronic ignition & 12v system, all chrome good, MoT, Tel. 01454 316146. Bristol



BSA BANTAM D7 1966, Super Deluxe, perfect restoration project, £300 spent on engine rebuild with new cylinder, bike complete except battery & tool kit, £650 ovno Tel. 01260 227247; 07860 554663. Cheshire



BSA D14 Bantam, 1969, good condition, MoT 2016, £1350 Tel. 07763 429913. Lancs



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BSA ROCKET GOLD STAR 1963, RRT2 gearbox, correct engine, frame and reg nos, full history, bills, MoTs, original buff log book, mint example, £19,500 Tel. 01932 231615; 07789 230684. Surrey



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HARLEY DAVIDSON Fat Boy, 1998, 13,000 miles only, Harley insurance valuation £13,000, three owners, Thunder star wheels etc, £7500 ono Tel. 07879 554409 day; 01263 710661 eve.



HARLEY DAVIDSON 1200 Sportster, 1996, 11,000 miles, long MoT, had since 2007, included in sale forward controls and slashcut exhaust. Tel. 07816 840300. Derbyshire



HARLEY DAVIDSON 883R Sportster, 2004, twin discs, Mustang Saddle, wind screen, new Hagons and fork seals regular servicing, 8500 miles, vgc, £4200 Tel. 01278 785190. Somerset



HONDA 400cc, 1980 with current MoT, ready to ride, £1250 may p/x classic bike, cash difference paid Tel. 01905 21667; 07966 178348. Worcestershire



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VINTAGE TYRES

The boss and the Baron at Earls Court

Words: MICHAEL BARRACLOUGH



The Earls Court show that took place in November 1962 was a particularly exciting occasion for the Triumph contingent, as it was the first public exposure of their brand new Trophy model which, for the first time, would be available with a unit-construction engine and gearbox.

Here we see John Moore-Brabazon, First Baron Brabazon of Tara, sitting on the new Trophy, with Triumph boss Edward Turner looking on.

Lord Brabazon of Tara, as he was known at the time, remains a vitally important part of Britain's aeronautical heritage. In the 1900s the Royal Aero Club issued him with the British F A I Pilot's Certificate Number One, which marks him as the first British person to be licensed as an aeroplane pilot. In 1909 Lord Brabazon made what is thought by many to be the first live cargo flight in an aeroplane, when he reportedly attached a waste paper basket to the wing strut of his French Voisin aircraft into which he placed a small pig as part of an elaborate joke to prove that pigs could fly. I doubt the pig was consulted about this impromptu venture into aviation!

The motorcycle that Lord Brabazon of Tara is on – the 650cc TR6 Trophy – was essentially a bigger version of the 500cc TR5 model. Its primary target demographic was American off-road riders, and it became very popular with them because of its sturdiness and ready supply of power.

This new Trophy had a freshly designed frame with a single front downtube and a strengthened swinging arm pivot, which was lug bolted to the rear engine plates and rear subframe.

Lord Brabazon of Tara passed away two years after this photograph was taken, and was succeeded by his eldest son Derek, who held the title for a only decade before he too died. The title is currently held by Derek's son, Ivon. End



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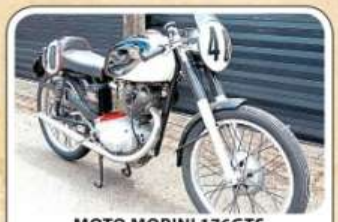
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Visit **www.transport-museum.com** for full details

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The Classic MOTORCYCLE

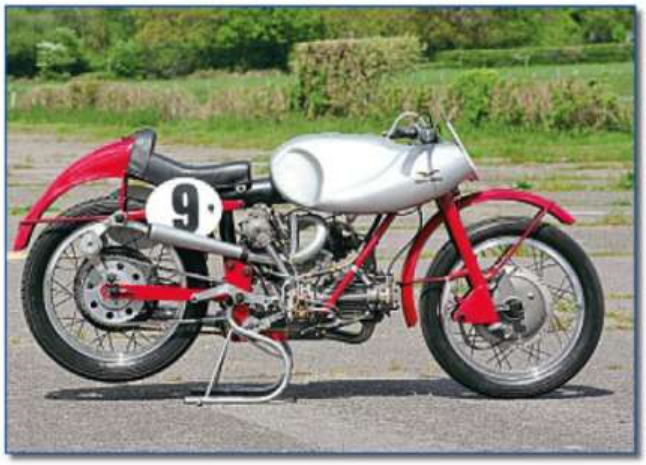
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FOREWORD BY

GARY HALL

CHIEF EXECUTIVE AT COVENTRY TRANSPORT MUSEUM

The last 150 years of Coventry's history have been shaped, in part, by the rise and fall of its motor, bicycle and motorcycle industries. In this time around 475 bicycle and tricycle makers, 161 car manufacturers and 116 motorcycle manufacturers have operated in the city, touching the lives of millions of people around the world.

Coventry Transport Museum has just completed a £9.5 million redevelopment of the museum where 13 of the 14 exhibition spaces have been completely transformed. The new exhibitions now portray the story of these industries through massive social change and momentous world events, telling the story of the city, its inhabitants and their phenomenal achievements from the very first bicycles to world record-breaking cars.

This supplement takes a brief look at some of the key players in Coventry's motorcycling past and the pioneers that helped to shape the world of motorcycling way beyond Coventry's boundaries.

Gary Hall

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The Classic MotorCycle

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THE INDUSTRIAL



Even at the dawn of the 19th century Coventry showed promising signs of growth and expansion as the industrial populace of the city began to increase, but there were a few impediments to the continued enlargement of Coventry that impacted directly on its growing population.

The western edge of the city struggled to expand, and to the south lay an entailed estate that could not be reclaimed for the erection of civic infrastructure. Many of the dwellings for new members of the working population were built in small, cramped areas including lanes, yards and gardens. Some streets were constructed across open ground – Chantry Place, Union Street and Whitefriars Street, for example – but much of the new working population lived in these small houses that were slotted in wherever they would fit.

The silk ribbon weaving industry had aided Coventry's growth enormously, but the city's textile industry diminished when the Cobden-Chevalier Treaty (a major trade agreement between England and France) was signed in 1860. The treaty

REVOLUTION

and the formation of a major British engineering hub

allowed for easier trade between the two countries by way of lowering the duties on British-manufactured goods exported to France, and French-manufactured goods imported into Britain. Britain saw an influx of French wine, brandy and textiles as a result, and this put such a strain on the Coventry-based ribbon makers that they were eventually forced out of business. The watchmakers operating in Coventry soon suffered a similar fate, as a new world of commerce began to emerge in Europe.

The unfortunate demise of Coventry's textile and watchmaking industries did not spell disaster for the developing production epicentre however, for the latter half of the 1800s marked the beginning of an exciting new chapter in Coventry's history. Coventry was – and still is – widely renowned as a city of reinvention and it owes this reputation to the fact that, while industries such as the many silk ribbon weaving and watchmaking businesses disappeared, the highly skilled working population remained. They proved to be extremely proficient at adapting their skills and these skills were transferred across many platforms. From sheep farming and wool production to the silk ribbon manufacturing industry that stemmed from that, and then into watchmaking (where such things as their expertise with factory machinery worked to their advantage), Coventry was able to move into the next phase in its industrial journey – the manufacture of bicycles, motorcars and motorcycles.

Bicycles were beginning to appear on the streets of the city as early as the 1860s, as Coventry's pioneer bicycle manufacturers started to establish themselves. Equally exciting was the fact that the city was becoming more able to expand its boundaries, as more and more land could be reclaimed for the erection of worker's houses. Three water mills were removed from the inner city in the 1840s, allowing for the land to be used for the construction of the Pool Meadow area in 1856-7, and a piece of legislation passed in 1845 released a considerable area of land between the city wall and Swanswell Pool.

The bicycle industry really began to germinate in Coventry too, and it wasn't long before more prospective makers moved into the city to seek their fortune. Rowley B Turner saw bicycles being made in France, and he was one of the first to introduce the new form of transport to the developing city. After experimenting with different sized wheels, frame size and even rudimentary suspension, the apex of bicycle design was finally reached, and it arrived in the late 1880s in the form of John Kemp Starley's Rover Safety Bicycle, which is the ancestor of every modern bicycle around today. Only years after the Rover Safety Bicycle arrived, the internal combustion engine had developed enough to allow for the design and manufacture of motorcars. Further refinement in engine size and efficiency soon led some intrepid entrepreneurs to insert them into bicycle frames.

Coventry was alive with the inspiring sights and sounds of a city on the rise, but with two World Wars around the corner the emerging city would again have to exemplify that knack for reinvention if it was to continue to thrive.

THE BLITZ

In the years since the first motorcars and motorcycles were being built there, Coventry's vehicular manufacturing industry had expanded to include a wide variety of other means of transportation, and could now produce working machines in far greater numbers, including aeroplanes.

As the Second World War reared its ugly head, cities such as Coventry and Birmingham became increasingly involved in war production, and their factories were soon turning out large quantities of armaments, as well as vehicles adapted for much more warlike purposes. Naturally, London, being the capital city, was subject to a horrendous barrage of air raids resulting in loss of life and irreparable damage to infrastructure, but cities like Coventry were in constant danger from above and experienced similar devastation to the English capital.

Aside from the multitude of air raids that took place during the latter half of 1940, there was one in particular – the night of November 14 – that will forever linger in the minds of the people who were unfortunate enough to be in Coventry when it happened. It is from this air raid that the providers of German propaganda coined the term coventrieren, which means 'to coventrate'. The word denoted complete and utter destruction, and was used to emphasise the proposed magnitude of the air raids that followed. This air raid was partially a retaliatory act for the increasingly offensive tactics displayed by the Allied forces, but its main purpose was to destroy the focal points of war production in the city of Coventry – mainly the factories producing armaments and war vehicles.

German targets included the Standard Motor Car Company's factory and the cathedral in the centre of the city, the latter bearing the brunt of an incessant deluge of incendiary bombs. One of the other large buildings in the centre of Coventry, and one that was in the immediate vicinity of the cathedral, was Triumph's Priory Street works.

The employees who were working the night shift in the Triumph works took refuge in nearby bomb shelters and, mercifully, none of them was killed, though the same cannot be said for the rest of the city. The total number of casualties on that night alone stood at 554, with a further 865 seriously injured. Triumph's Priory Street works suffered a direct hit and the building was reduced to a smouldering ruin. More than



200 fires burned throughout the night across the city and when Triumph staff returned to the wreckage of the works the following morning they were met with an unexploded bomb amid the debris.

Plans were put in place to resuscitate as much of the war production effort as possible and the city set about healing itself as best it could. There was another terrible bombing on the night of April 8, 1941, but the city endured. After another four years of war, Coventry emerged battered and bruised, but certainly not beaten.

KEEPING THE STORY GOING

Coventry Transport Museum first opened its doors to the public in 1980, and has since established itself as one of the foremost cycle, motorcar and motorcycle museums in the UK, and one with a large and diverse collection of exhibits covering more than 100 years of transport heritage.

Before the museum was opened, the many examples of Coventry's vehicular manufacturing tradition were housed in the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum but, as the collection grew, the amount of available space in the Herbert facility dwindled. Other sites were utilised to ensure all the exhibits had a home as the collection expanded, but soon it was clear that a single, large facility dedicated to preserving Coventry's transport heritage would be required, and so the museum was born.

The museum has gone from strength to strength, and a recent £9.5 million redevelopment project has ensured that it remains current. One of the interesting things the museum has done is include 'classroom spaces' which, although they promote education about the city's manufacturing industry (both past and present – plus a look at what the future might hold) and can be used by schools visiting the museum, are expansive and engaging, and do not resemble your typical school classroom. Children are free to design their own motor vehicles based on what they have seen in the museum or purely from their own imagination. This is just one



of the ways that Coventry Transport Museum is keeping the story going.

Thirteen of the 14 exhibition spaces have been totally re-imagined to give a much more interesting – and interactive – look at what the city has produced. Even a simple mirror beneath an old motorcar can help museum-goers discover exactly how this pioneering technology worked, though there are many exhibits that utilise modern technology to provide a multi-sensory experience – the 4D Land Speed Record Simulator is a good example of this. The Blitz exhibition allows visitors to experience the devastation of the air raids of the Second World War, and the museum also boasts an impressive array of service vehicles.



Queen Mary's Daimler, one of the grandest motorcars in the museum

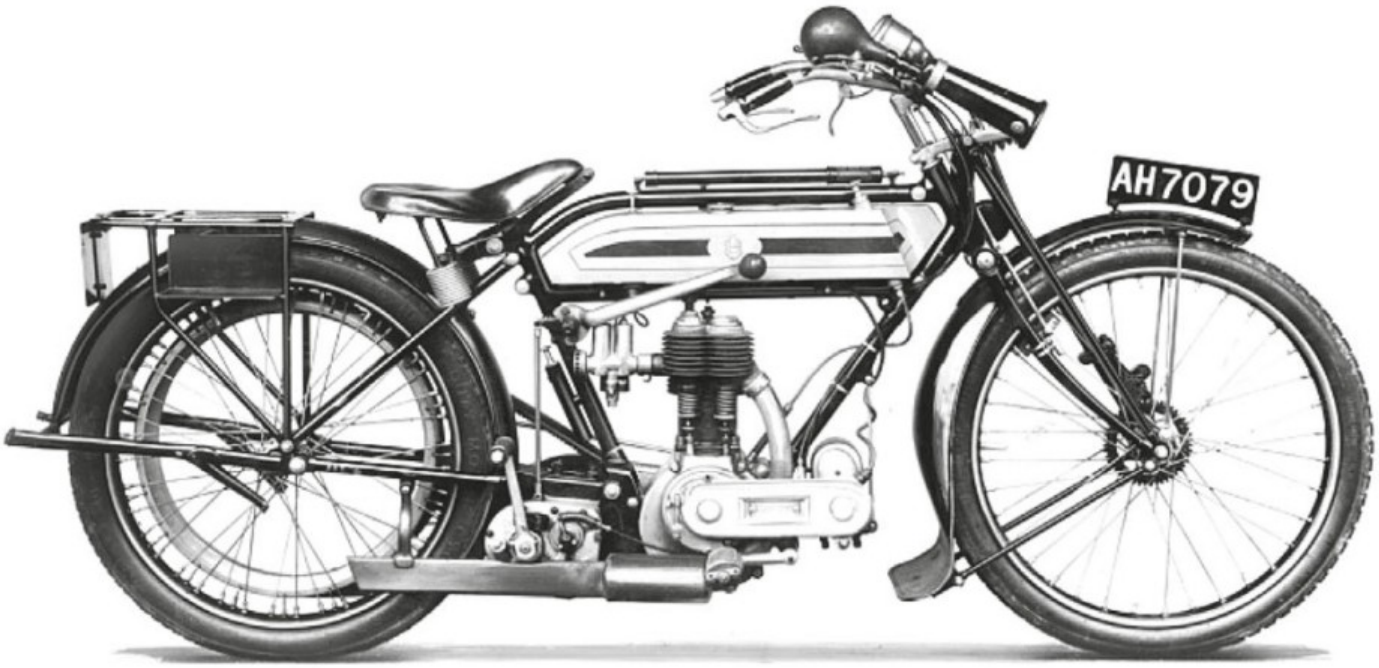
Among the most popular exhibits at the museum is the 1910-11 Maudslay motorcar. Big, green and with large brass headlights, the Maudslay has been popular with children. Other popular attractions include Thrust SSC, which is a British-built land speed record car, and Queen Mary's Daimler, which was one of two identical cars given to King George V and Queen Mary on their Silver Jubilee in 1935. There are a great many motorcycles that attract a lot of attention, including Stanley Glanfield's Rudge and Ted Simon's Triumph. The collection is still growing, so it's anybody's guess what historic Coventry-made machines will fill the halls of the museum in the future.



LIKE TO VISIT COVENTRY TRANSPORT MUSEUM?

The Museum is open from 10.00am to 5.00pm every day (latest admission 4.30pm) except December 24-26 and January 1. Admission is free.

See www.transport-museum.com or telephone 024 7623 4270 for general enquiries.



TRIUMPH

The Triumph success story is an inimitable tale of a few men with a passion for motorcycling who carried the company over the years. From the 'Trusty Triumph' (the Triumph Model H) of the First World War to the disastrous bombing of the Priory Street works in the Second, Triumph has endured, and remains one of the frontrunners in modern motorcycle design.

Triumph began in 1886 when German Siegfried Bettmann started selling British bicycles under the Triumph name, though they were only sold abroad at that time. Later the same year Bettmann decided to manufacture his own bicycles, and the company name changed to the Triumph Cycle Co. Ltd as his operation got underway. He was soon joined by his friend and fellow German Mauritz Schulte.

The fledgling company thrived in the very cycle-oriented industrial landscape of Coventry, and soon outgrew its Much Park Street works, moving to larger premises on Priory Street. It is here that the Triumph motorcycle took shape for the first time, and where the story of Triumph motorcycles began in earnest. In 1902, after many years of careful development, experimentation and refinement, Triumph released its first 'motorcycle' – which was essentially a modified bicycle with a clip-on Minerva engine kit from the Belgian firm run by Sylvain de Jong.

The first few years of the new century were spent trying



A 1944 Triumph 3HW on display in Coventry Transport Museum. This is one of 50,000 bikes built by Triumph during the Second World War

Left: The 'Trusty Triumph' – the Model H

to perfect – as far as current technology and metallurgy would allow – the company's own 363cc engine, and thus end its dependence on imported proprietary engines. By 1909 it became apparent that this strategy had been very wise, as sales figures stood at roughly 3000 machines sold that year, compared with only 500 a year in 1906.

The First World War soon lumbered into view, by which time the 363cc Triumph power unit had grown to 550cc, and was more robust than ever. Triumph was fortunate to accept a massively important contract from the War Office that kept it solvent throughout the conflict, and was one of the very few companies that actually managed to remain in the pink (and even make a profit) during the turbulent years of the First World War.

In 1923 Triumph built its first motorcar. Mauritz Schulte had been trying to persuade Bettmann to start considering the serious manufacture of cars in the years leading up to this development, and it seems that their once very amicable relationship soured. Schulte left the company in the early 1920s after a particularly bad disagreement with Siegfried Bettmann, so the thought process behind the decision to take Schulte's idea forward and manufacture a car is rather perplexing.

Schulte's absence was certainly felt in the years following his departure. The once 'tried and true' reputation of Triumph machines began to suffer slightly without the careful scrutiny of Schulte to ensure everything was up to scratch. The Triumph Model P was subjected to a litany of remarks about its apparent lack of quality when it first emerged, but these faults were quickly remedied with the arrival of the Mk.2 version, and Triumph managed to hold on to its mantle as a marque famed for reliability.



Some soldiers share a laugh as one man tinkers with his 3TW (or is it a 3HW?)



The Second World War was devastating for the Triumph concern, and the years leading up to it were not much better. Siegfried Bettmann, founder of the marque and the anchor of the company, had departed in the 1930s and Ariel's Jack Sangster had stepped in at the behest of the Official Receiver for Lloyd's Bank, Mr Graham, to try to rescue the company before it fell into ruin. Edward Turner and Valentine 'Val' Page were brought on board as managing director and chief designer respectively and their combined hard work and dedication was enough to ensure the company remained one of the most famous in the country.

The centre of Coventry bore the brunt of some of the worst air raids of the war and, as mentioned earlier in the supplement, the Priory Street works were completely destroyed. Triumph managed to endure by moving to temporary premises in an old foundry in Warwick, and production was up and running again barely a year after the terrible night of November 14, 1940. Production at Warwick lasted for two years before Triumph moved into its new premises in Meriden, north-east of Coventry.

In the 1950s and 60s the American market became a huge factor regarding how Triumph styled and marketed their machines. The Triumph Thunderbird of 1949 proved to be very popular in America, and was Marlon Brando's choice of mount in the classic biker film The Wild One, surprising many American motorcycle aficionados who assumed that the American actor would be mounted on a Harley-Davidson. The American market always demanded more power, and in



A handsome last vintage Triumph sidecar outfit on display at Coventry Transport Museum



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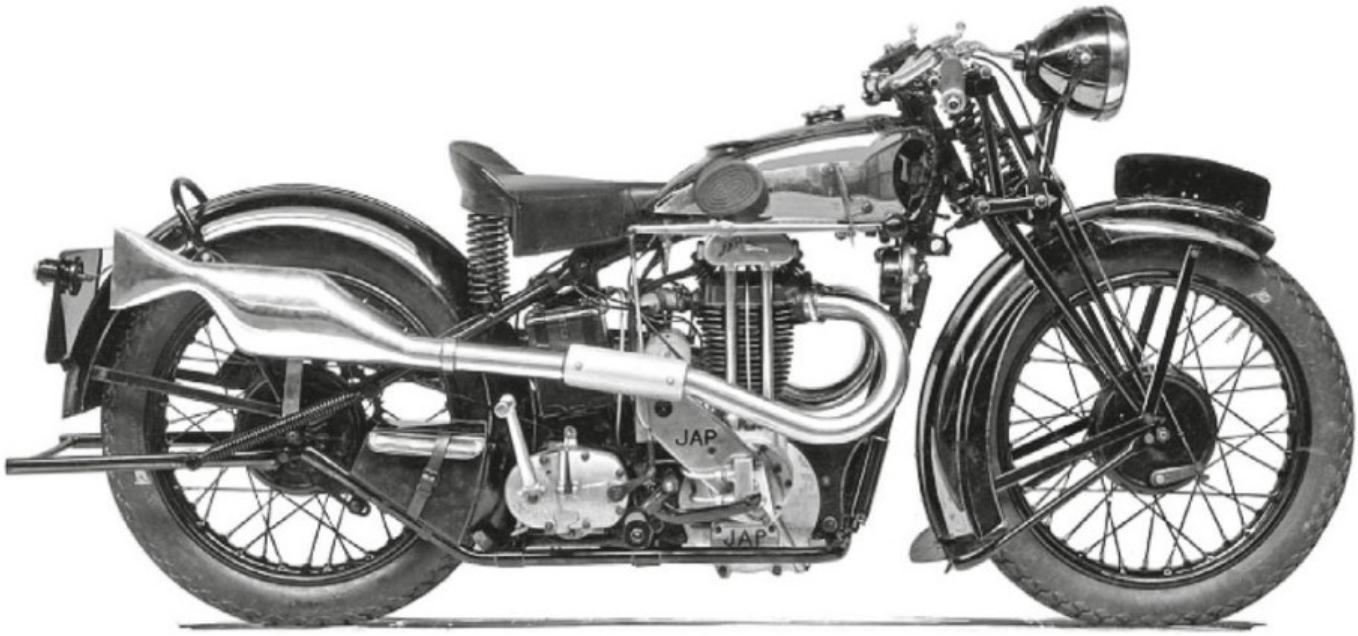
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1959 the first T120 Bonnevilles rolled off the production line. These were immensely popular with American and British motorcyclists alike with their ready supply of power, rapid acceleration and excellent handling.

As the years wore on even the mighty Bonneville was looking a little off the pace in comparison with the new Japanese models that were flooding the market. Triumph's T140 750cc Bonneville sold well for a couple of years, but sales began to dwindle. The company, which had been owned by BSA since 1951, started manufacturing the Trident model – a long overdue three-cylinder roadster – which it was hoped would turn the tide and direct a bit of much-needed revenue towards Triumph and its parent company, BSA. This, again, sold in modest quantities, but bikes such as the Honda CB750 were dominating the market and leaving no room for the British machines.

In a last ditch effort to rescue the company, Triumph and BSA merged with Norton-Villiers to form NVT (Norton-Villiers-Triumph), which was led by Dennis Poore, but the fate of the NVT-led Triumph marque was now inescapable. By 1978 the company had ground to halt and, despite several efforts to get it back on level ground, Triumph had terminated all production and sold Meriden by the end of 1982.

In 1985 John Bloor purchased the manufacturing rights and rebuilt the Triumph name from the ground up, starting with a new factory in Hinckley. Triumph has gone from strength to strength since then, and remains in operation today.



REX-ACME

An amalgamation of two notable Coventry manufacturers, Rex-Acme motorcycles were favoured by such riders as Walter 'Wal' Handley and were very successful at the Isle of Man TT.

The Rex Motor Company bought its way into the Coventry Acme Motor Company at the very beginning of the 1920s, combining the two marques into a single unified name under the new company title – the Rex-Acme Motor Co.

Both companies had been active for 20 years before their merger, and the resulting composite of knowledge and experience in the industry resulted in some top-quality motorcycles that would prove to be very impressive on the racetrack in the years following the company's inception. One of the first Rex-Acme motorcycles to roll out of the works at Osborne Road was a 247cc two-stroke. Interestingly, the 247cc motor was of Morris make, as opposed to any of the more 'motorcycle-oriented' proprietary engine makers. Before merging with the Coventry Acme Motor Co, Rex predominantly used its own engines in its machines. In 1921 Rex-Acme produced a very handsome 350cc



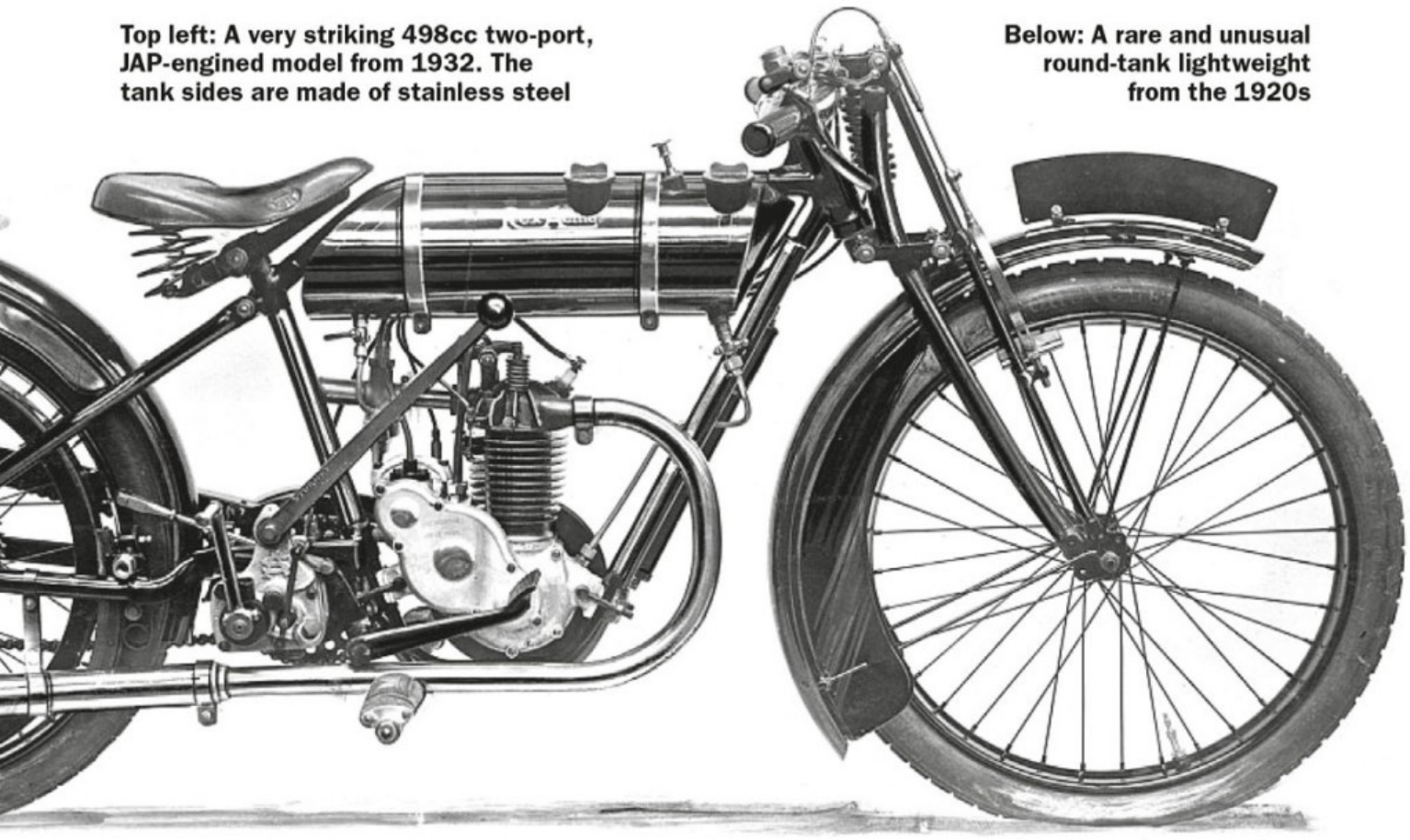
Blackburne-engined single that is thought by many to be the first 'true' Rex-Acme.

In 1925 the great Wal Handley joined Rex-Acme and raced the company's machines for just over three years, racking up victories in the 1925 Junior and Ultra-Lightweight TT races as well as in the Lightweight TT of 1927. One of the main reasons that Rex-Acme motorcycles sold so well is that the man on the street could purchase a machine almost identical to the works racers that iconic riders such as 'Wal' Handley took to the Isle of Man TT, which was where any bike worth its salt would go to prove its racing prowess. Handley was very successful on the Island, and soon became works manager and later the director of the company. He eventually left Rex-Acme at the end of the 1920s, leaving an impressive legacy, including a new one-hour world record (Handley covered 91.21 miles in the space of an hour on a 348cc Blackburne-engined Rex-Acme) and several impressive performances at the TT.

The company moved forward, still offering a wide range of machines with JAP, Villiers and Blackburne engines. They even resuscitated the 'Speed King' model that was part of the old Rex line-up, before the Rex Motor Co and the Coventry Acme Motor Co joined forces. Unfortunately the company could only go so far before the austerity of the early 1930s began to set in. By 1931 the company was all but defunct. Rex-Acme was purchased by sidecar manufacturers Mills-Fulford Ltd in 1932 and launched a range of Villiers, JAP and Blackburne-engined models. These bikes sadly could not keep the company solvent during the Depression, and sales continued to wane. Rex-Acme managed only one more year in production before the business closed its doors for good.

Top left: A very striking 498cc two-port, JAP-engined model from 1932. The tank sides are made of stainless steel

Below: A rare and unusual round-tank lightweight from the 1920s



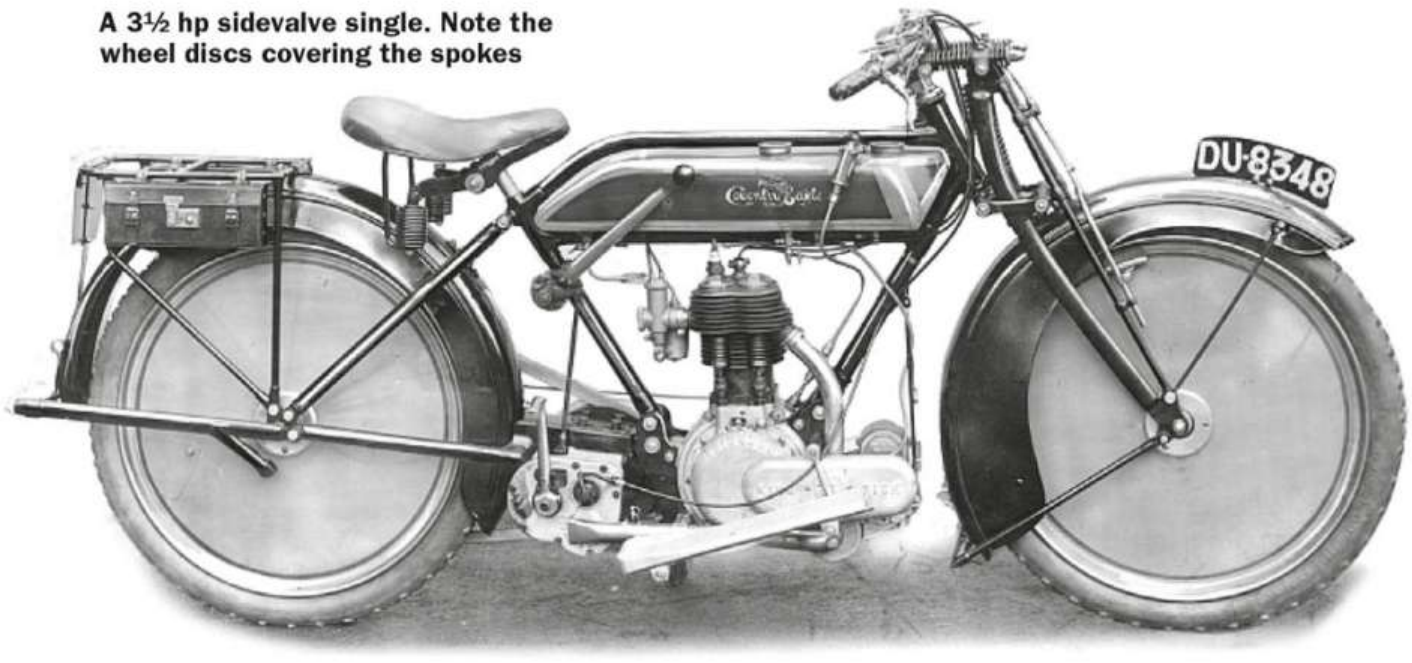
COVENTRY-EAGLE

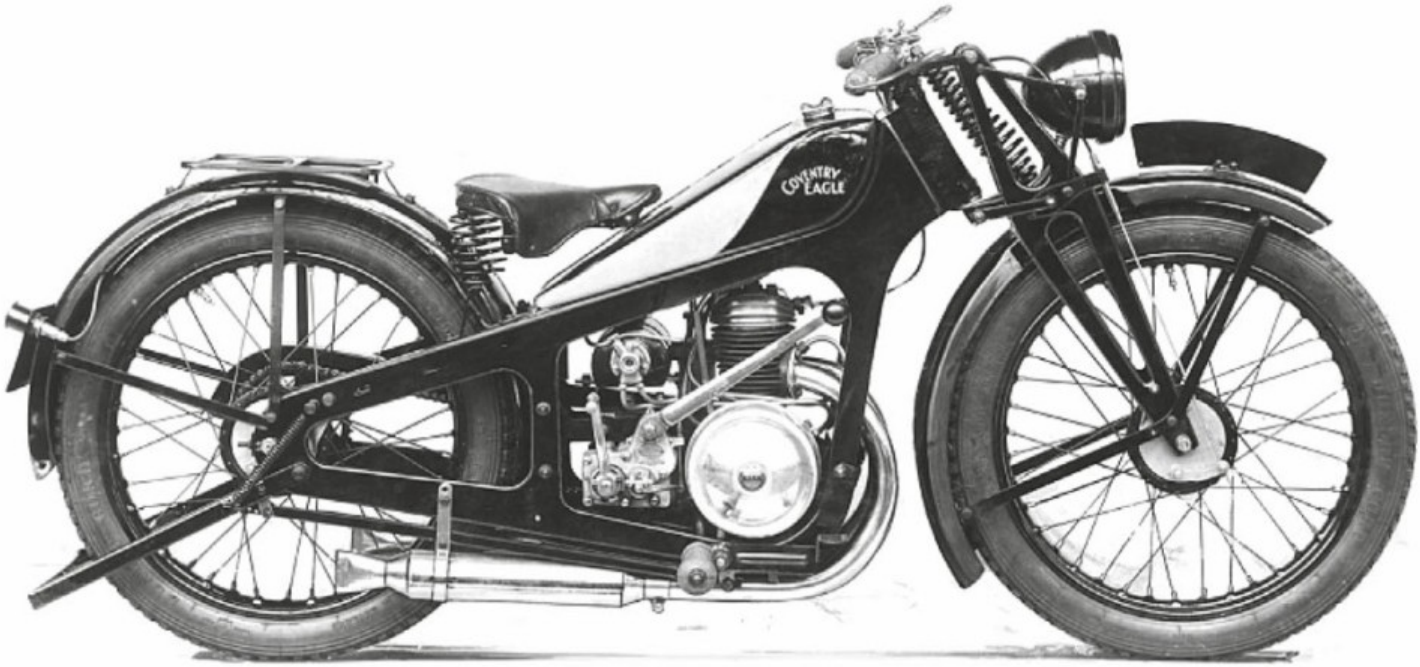
From powerful V-twins to pokey lightweights, Coventry-Eagle made a great many machines and was in operation for more than half a century.

Coventry-Eagle is perhaps the most well-known of the several marques that incorporated the name of the city into their own company name. The company had its roots in a bicycle company founded in 1890. It first had its premises at Hill Cross and began by manufacturing and selling 'Royal Eagle' bicycles. Seven years after the company was formed one of the three initial founders, a Mr Hotchkiss, passed away, and then another of the trio, John Meek, decided to leave the business. Responsibility for the company fell to the last-remaining member of the original group of founders, Edmund Mayo, who decided to enlist the help of a gentleman named Bernard Rotherham. The name of the company soon changed to the Coventry Eagle Cycle Co.

Barely a year after the death of Hotchkiss, Coventry-Eagle built its first motorcycle, which featured a Coventry-made MMC engine. This motorcycle was accompanied by a forecar, as forecars, tricars

A 3½ hp sidevalve single. Note the wheel discs covering the spokes





This 172cc super sports model had an innovative frame and twinport single-cylinder engine

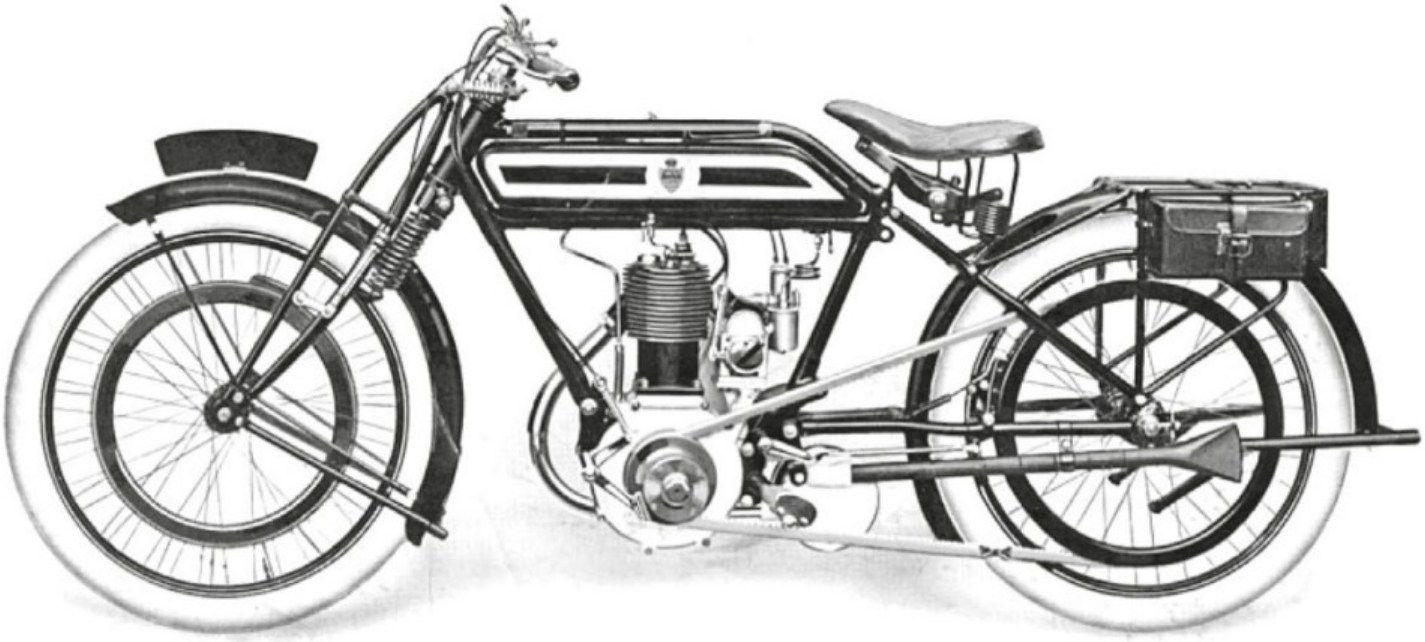
and other such contraptions were very much in vogue at the time, though their impracticality quickly led to their eventual demise.

Coventry-Eagle was very much a family business. In 1902 Edmund Mayo's son Arthur became the secretary of the company (which had undergone another change of name and was now called the New Coventry Eagle Co), and only a few short years after Arthur joined the business his own son, Percy, was also welcomed on board.

The company blossomed and offered a range of Villiers-engined motorcycles – interspersed with the occasional JAP-engined model – up until the early 1920s. At this point Coventry-Eagle machines could be purchased with a variety of engines from several different concerns, depending on what was available. Before long the legendary 'Flying 8' model became available to the public. These powerful V-twins bore a distinct resemblance to George Brough's high-quality Brough Superior motorcycles, and today Flying 8s sell for more than £100,000 at auction.

Coventry-Eagle moved to Foleshill Road, and its reputation continued to grow. Brough Superior and JAP legend Bert le Vack started breaking records at Brooklands on a specially tuned 1000cc Coventry-Eagle, and the factory's V-twins became more popular. Towards the end of the 1920s, the thoughts of the company executives turned to the economy and how to lower the costs of production. Many of the larger V-twin models were dropped and in their place Coventry-Eagle began producing lightweight machines such as the 147cc Villiers-engined model that was made available to the public in 1927.

Motorcycle sales were on the rise in the 1930s and the marque experienced some good years when it sold many machines and even built an autocycle, the 'Auto-Ette', but the good times were not destined to last. By 1950 only three original Coventry manufacturers (Triumph, Francis-Barnett and Coventry-Eagle) remained in the city, but it was to be the last year of motorcycle production for the ailing Coventy-Eagle company. It moved its premises to Duggins Lane and continued to sell bicycles, but by 1959 business had dried up and the factory closed its doors indefinitely.



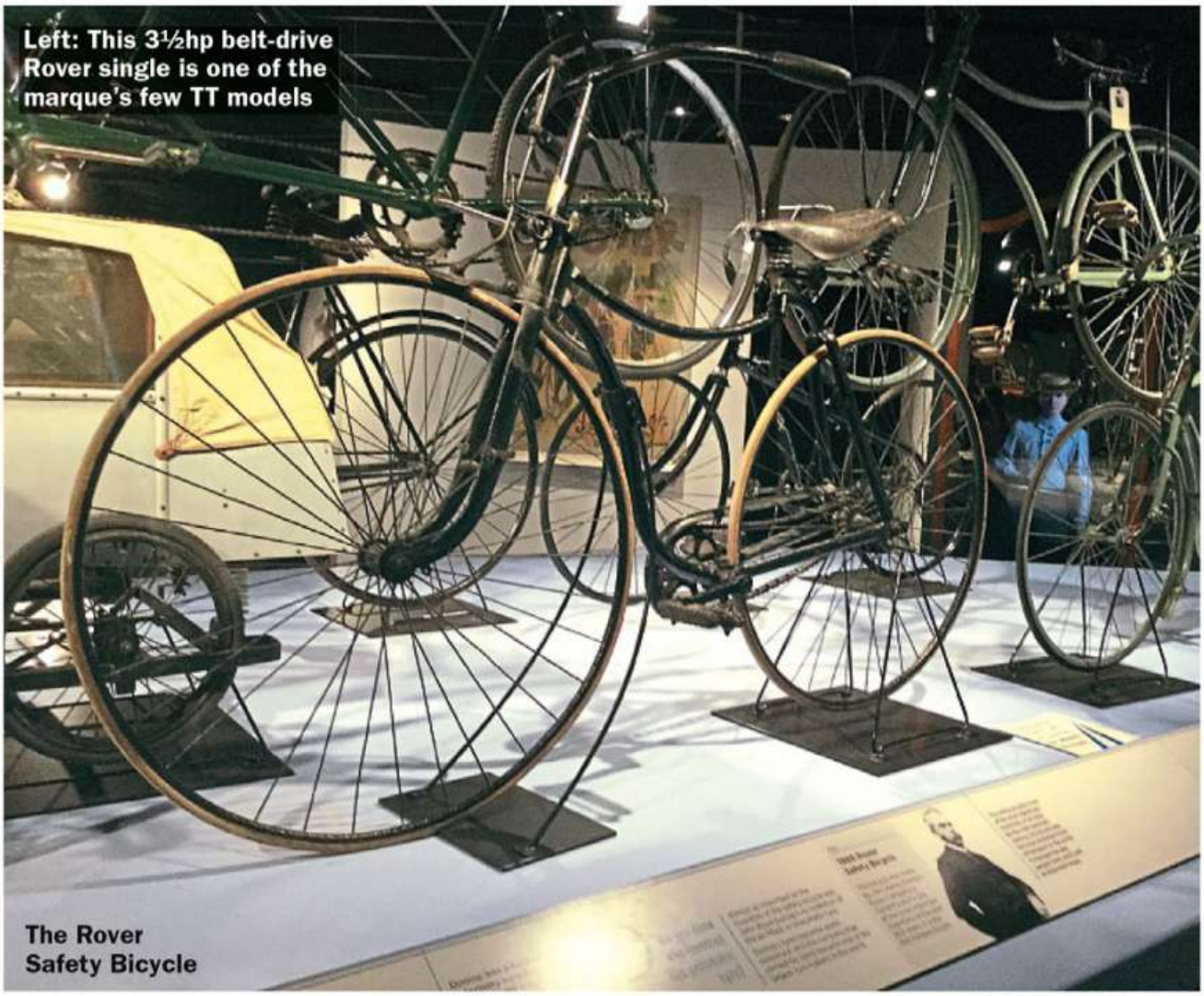
ROVER

Credited with the invention of the Rover Safety Bicycle – the 'mitochondrial eve' of all modern bicycles – John Kemp Starley's Rover marque was a prominent innovator in Coventry in the cycle boom of the mid-to-late 1800s.

Rover is one of the earliest marques to be established in Coventry, and one that was a quintessential part of the pioneering cycle manufacturing that took place before the advent of the internal combustion engine. James Starley had been involved in the burgeoning cycle industry since the mid-1800s, and soon his innovative designs were taken up by his nephew, John Kemp Starley, who really kick-started the Rover concern in earnest.

In 1877 John Kemp Starley founded Starley & Sutton with friend William Sutton and began manufacturing cycles and tricycles at their premises in West Orchard. A breakthrough came in 1885 when Starley used the Rover name for the first time with his ground-breaking Rover 'Safety bicycle'. Employing two wheels of the same size and a diamond-shaped frame, this cycle is the ancestral form of all modern bicycles.

In 1896 the business became the Rover Cycle Co, and Harry Smith took on the role of managing director. This shift was accompanied by a move to larger premises on Garfield Road, and it was only two years after this that Rover began toying with the idea of manufacturing its first motorcycle. In 1903, Rover produced its first commercially available motorcycle. These were designed by Edmund Lewis – formerly of Daimler – and had 2¼hp engines. In 1904 Rover



Left: This 3½hp belt-drive Rover single is one of the marque's few TT models

The Rover Safety Bicycle

also listed a tricar with a water-cooled engine and chain drive.

Motorcycle production was put on the back-burner for a few years, as Rover had gained renown as a motorcar manufacturer and was keen to 'push the envelope' in this lucrative young market. Between 1908 and 1909 the company did supply complete cycle sets to the British arm of engine manufacturer MAG for use in the Motosacoche Motor Unit. In 1910 Rover released a 3½hp belt-driven motorcycle with a Bosch magneto that was designed by new employee John Greenwood, and this managed to attract quite a few sales until the outbreak of the First World War.

Rover really began to come into its own after the war. A range of rorty JAP-engined V-twins was announced, followed by a bona fide TT racer in 1921. The twin was replaced by a 249cc lightweight in 1923. Car production began to take precedence over motorcycle manufacture, and once again Rover focused the majority of its energy on making cars. Motorcycle production ceased in 1927, though car production managed to last until 1940 when the factory was destroyed in an air raid. Of course, production did resume for a number of years in Solihull, but the marque's tenure as one of Coventry's most esteemed vehicle manufacturers had come to an end.



MONTGOMERY

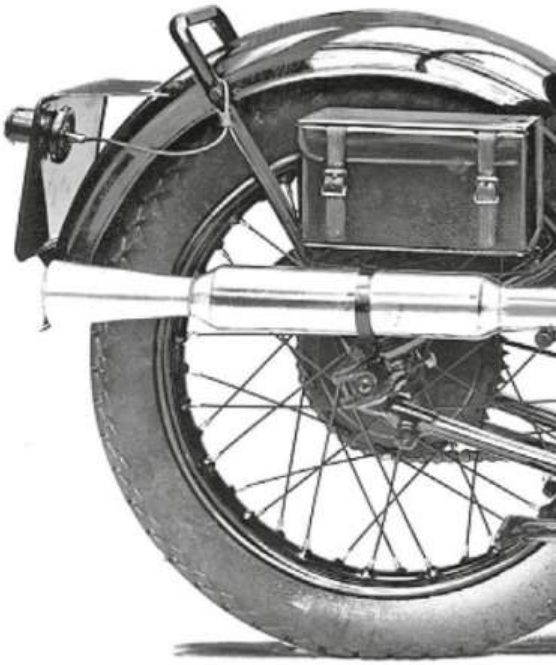
The Montgomery marque was not born in Coventry, but Coventry was where it flourished. Producing motorcycles and sidecars, the company offered an attractive range of machines.

The ancestor of Montgomery was a pioneering cycle company based out of Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, which was founded in 1892. In 1904 the company changed direction, putting much more emphasis on motorcycles. The 1905 model was fitted with a 5hp V-twin engine, and the sidecar was particularly fine; it had a handsome wicker-work body, and it was claimed by Montgomery that the optional sidecar could be detached from its motorised counterpart in a mere two minutes. One striking advertisement even featured an image of a motorcycle with a sidecar attached to either side.

In 1911 the business relocated to Freeth Street in Coventry, and this is where the business – ably commanded by two brothers, William and James Montgomery – began to shine. Late in 1913 Montgomery released an unusual 689cc flat twin model, the engine from which was bought in from neighbouring motorcycle firm Coventry Victor. In 1915 the engine had expanded to 708cc.

The company manufactured its motorcycles at its Freeth Street works until 1919, whereupon the company

Above: Who could refuse this gleaming V-twin Montgomery?

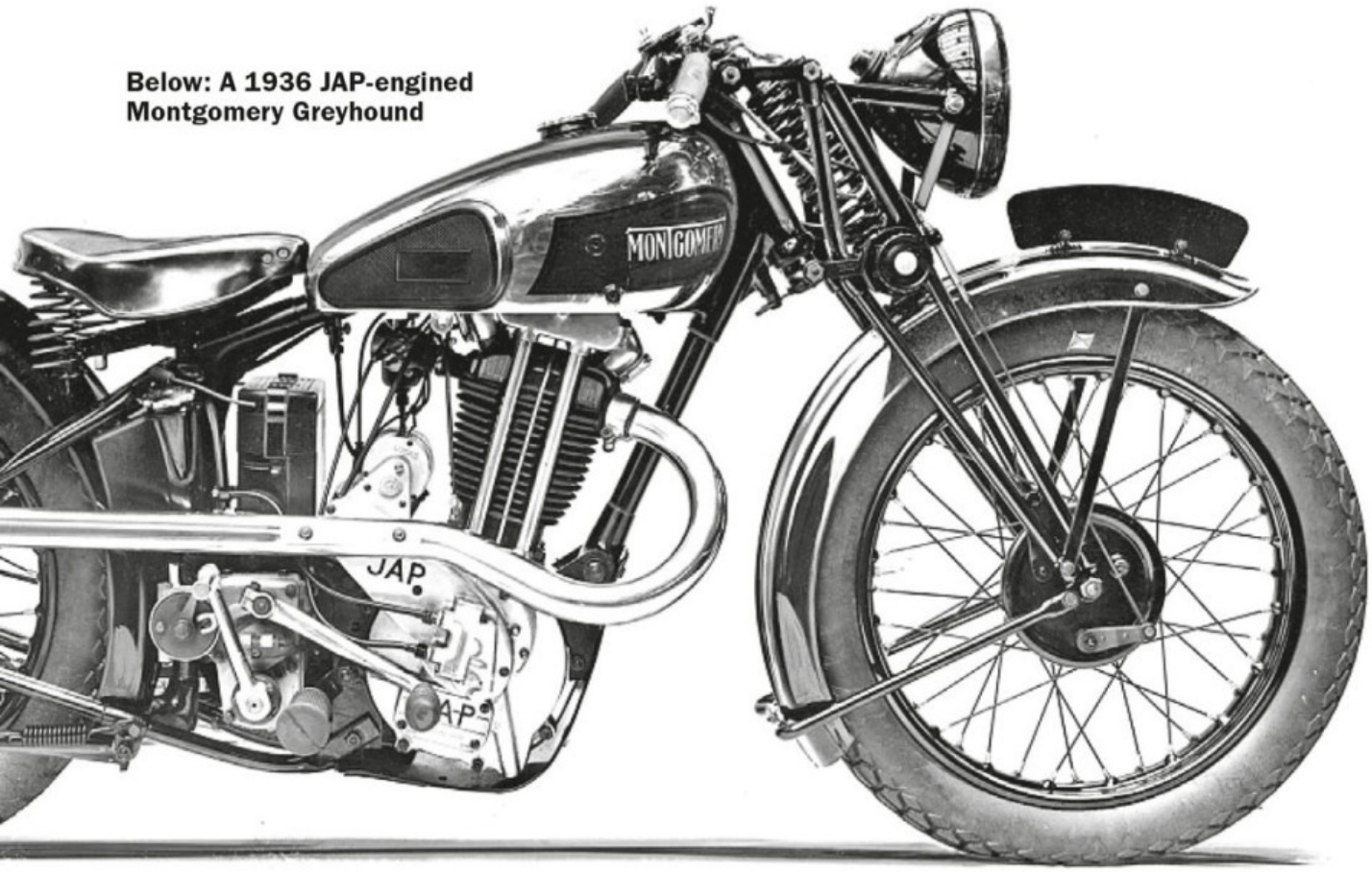


moved to Lower Ford Street, which was establishing itself as a centre of motorcycle production in Coventry. Montgomery built machines to appeal to every demographic, especially after the First World War. The company manufactured mighty 996cc V-twins, little 147cc two-strokes and everything in between, and could also boast its trademark range of handsomely finished sidecars. One of the company's postwar innovations was a clever front fork complete with leaf springing which, as well as being fitted to a great many Montgomery motorcycles, was also sold as a proprietary component to marques such as Brough Superior and Coventry Eagle.

Disaster struck in 1925 when a fire ravaged Montgomery's Lower Ford Street works, which unfortunately was beyond repair once the flames had receded. The company moved to Leicester Causeway, and resumed motorcycle production. In the years that followed Montgomery began using the names of various breeds of dog as the monikers for its machines. The Terrier, which – as the name suggests – was a little lightweight machine, joined the Montgomery roster in 1936. It was inexpensive and economical, and also fairly reliable thanks to its trusty 122cc Villiers engine. A 98cc model became available soon after. Other names that Montgomery often used included the Greyhound, the Red Fox and the Flying Fox.

Montgomery moved forward, offering two- and four-strokes in varying sizes, but they were the victim of misfortune once again as the factory suffered a direct hit from a Luftwaffe bomber in 1940, which completely obliterated the factory. There was to be no recovery from this catastrophe for Montgomery; the company was forced to bow out of the world of motorcycle production just as so many of its contemporaries had.

Below: A 1936 JAP-engined Montgomery Greyhound





A lovely Francis-Barnett Falcon at Coventry Transport Museum

FRANCIS-BARNETT

Famous for their plucky Villiers-engined lightweights and the rather eccentric-looking Fulmar model of later years, Francis-Barnett made high-quality machines in Coventry for more than 40 years.

One of Coventry's most well-renowned marques, Francis-Barnett first made its home on Lower Ford Street in 1919. The company's name is derived from those of its two founders, Gordon Francis – formerly of rival Coventry motorcycle manufacturer Lea-Francis – and Arthur Barnett, who had worked for the Singer Motor Co before joining forces with Francis to create Francis-Barnett.

The duo began their working relationship by continuing to make and sell Barnett's 'Invicta' motorcycles, which was a name he registered himself. They sold Invicta motorcycles for a brief period before their attention



Gary talks Michael through the arduous task of mounting a rally car on a wall! The motorcycle is a Francis-Barnett Fulmar

turned wholly to their new, joint venture, Francis-Barnett.

The first Francis-Barnett motorcycle was made available to purchase in 1920. This machine was a 292cc JAP-engined mount with footboards, sprung forks and a two-speed gearbox. In 1921 the JAP-engined machine was joined by a 269cc Villiers-engined model, and a year later a 346cc JAP-engined machine with all-chain drive joined the Francis-Barnett line-up.

Francis-Barnett had a very successful first decade in business. In 1923 the company's new triangulated frame concept, which employed seven pairs of tubes and was promoted as being



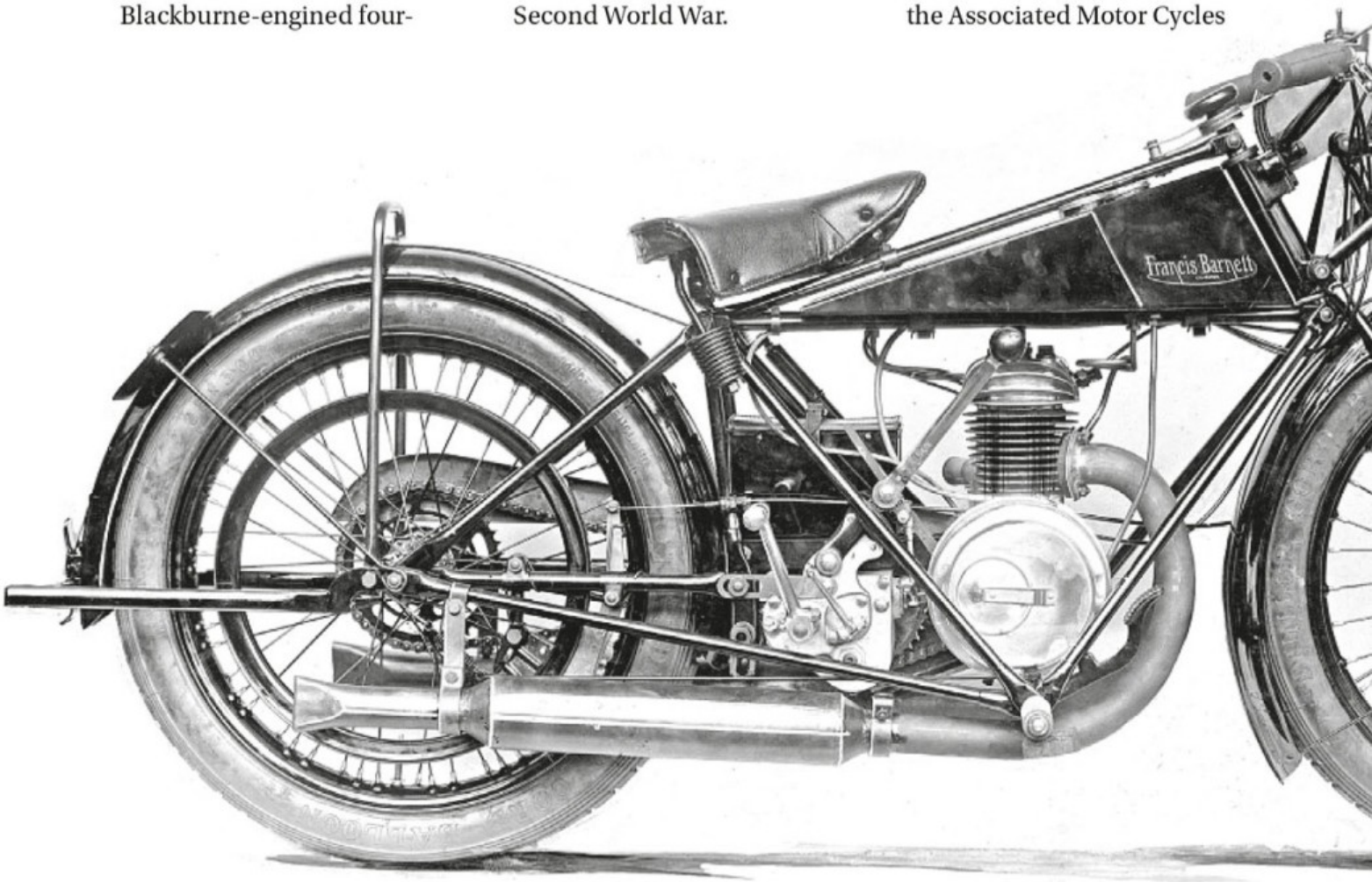
Featured in this impressive display is Coventry Transport Museum's Francis-Barnett Stag model – the red and chrome machine is in the middle of the display

'built like a bridge', proved to be a big hit with consumers. The models built around this new frame concept were marketed at a very reasonable price, which added greatly to their appeal.

In the 1930s some of the marque's most well-known model names, such as the Kestrel, the Merlin and the Plover, were used for the first time. In 1933 the Cruiser joined the roster and, with its new frame, enclosed engine and gearbox, it represented quite a change for the company in terms of aesthetics. In 1935 Francis-Barnett did produce a very interesting Blackburne-engined four-stroke with crossed pushrods that was offered for three years before it was pulled. The model was dubbed Stag and Coventry Transport Museum has managed to obtain one such machine – a 1936 'Sports' model in stunning red and chrome.

Arthur Barnett passed away in 1927 and his son, Eric, took his place as the company's sales director. Gordon Francis continued his role as the technical director. Francis-Barnett produced a line of reliable Villiers-engined two-strokes for the remainder of the decade, which saw them through to the beginning of the Second World War.

After the war had finally reached its conclusion, Francis-Barnett resumed normal production and re-entered the civilian motorcycle market with two brand new lightweights – a 98cc autocycle dubbed the Powerbike, and a 122cc Villiers-engined motorcycle named the Merlin, carrying the name forward postwar. The late 1940s and early 50s saw the suspension on all the machines in the Francis-Barnett contingent receive an upgrade, as telescopic front forks and pivoted-fork rear suspension began to appear. In 1947 Francis-Barnett joined the Associated Motor Cycles





Above: The unusual-looking Francis-Barnett Fulmar

Below: A splendid 172cc Model 10 'Super Sports' from the mid-1920s.



(AMC) group, joining marques such as Matchless and AJS.

The company suffered a terrible blow in 1953 when Eric Barnett was killed. He had pulled his car over near Princethorpe to make a telephone call and was crossing the road when he was hit and killed by a lorry.

The 'Cruiser' moniker was revived in 1954 and assigned to a 224cc model, though this machine did not exhibit the enclosed engine and gearbox that its prewar namesake did.

AMC's ownership of the company had some interesting effects. AMC set about fitting its own engines into the Francis-Barnett models in place of the reliable little Villiers' units, and slowly all the Villiers-engined models were phased out. A disappointing slump in sales and an unfortunate decline in the marque's reputation for reliability caused Francis-Barnett to switch back to Villiers' engines in the early 1960s, but it was too little, too late.

In 1962 Francis-Barnett stopped producing its motorcycles in Coventry. Production moved to the James factory in Birmingham. It was at this point that the Fulmar – one of the marque's most distinctive and collectable models – first appeared. This slightly outlandish bike owed its unique appearance to its spine frame and pressed-steel bodywork. Coventry Transport Museum has a fine example of one of these machines on display.

Francis-Barnett ceased production indefinitely in October 1966. By this time Japanese motorcycles were flooding the market and British marques such as Francis-Barnett simply couldn't compete any longer.



The beautiful Humber Olympia forecar on display at Coventry Transport Museum

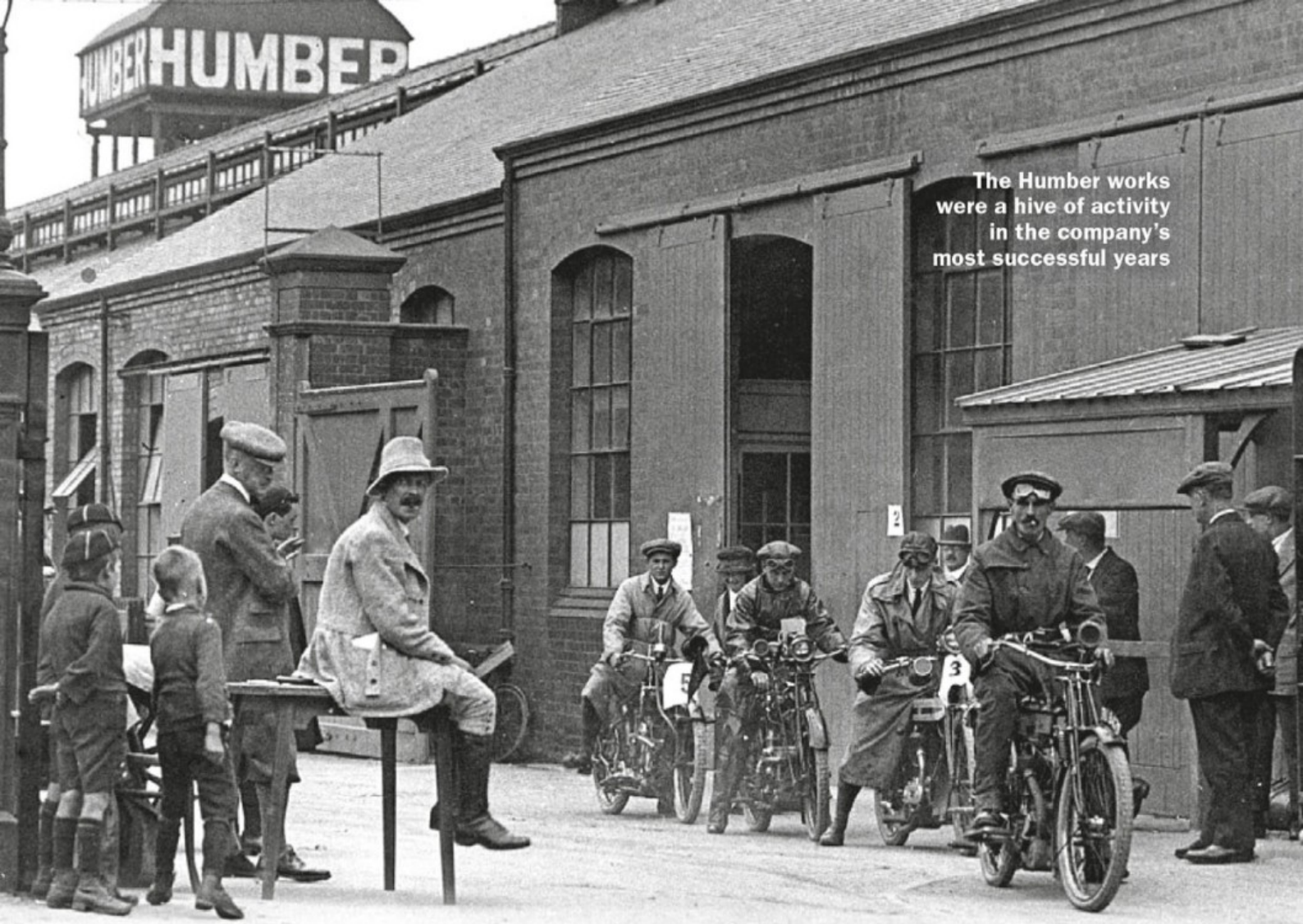
HUMBER

Of all the Coventry-based marques, few could boast the same diverse range of machinery Humber could. At the apex of its most productive years, Humber was building bicycles, cars, motorcycles and much more besides.

Thomas Humber began his journey into the world of motorcycles in the same manner as many of his contemporaries – by manufacturing bicycles that, at later stages, were fitted with proprietary engines.

He didn't actually begin his bicycle manufacturing career in Coventry – he spent many years moving from firm to firm, honing his considerable skills as a blacksmith. He first encountered bicycles when William Campion – his employer at the time – returned from a trip to Paris in 1867 with a Michaux velocipede and asked that Thomas produce six sets of copy forgings at the firm's factory in Nottingham. His interest piqued, Humber left the employ of Campion not long afterwards to manufacture bicycles of his own and his first complete bicycle (christened the 'Spider Bicycle') was built in 1873.

Thomas Humber's bicycles proved very popular and it wasn't long before they were being manufactured in Beeston, Wolverhampton and, from 1885, in Coventry, first on Whitefriars Lane and then on Lower Ford Street. At this point in history the



The Humber works were a hive of activity in the company's most successful years

Beeston-Humber machines were regarded as some of the finest money could buy.

At the turn of the new century the bicycle boom was surmounted by the concept of the 'autocar'. Soon there was talk of installing engines into bicycle frames and some sources state that Humber was making rudimentary motorcycles as early as 1896. Some of the earliest Humber machines utilised the Minerva kits that were being offered by Belgian motorcycle manufacturing pioneer, Sylvain de Jong, which could be attached quite easily to the front downtube of a standard safety bicycle frame. Other early efforts were made under licence by P&M.

The reputation and production output of Humber grew exponentially and it was able to produce not only bicycles and motorcycles but tricars, forecars, motor-tricycles and, in 1901, the first conventional Humber car, which was powered by a 4.5hp De Dion engine. The Coventry Transport Museum exhibits a vast array of early Humber machines, including a 1904 Humber Olympia forecar. Humber motorcycles had become a cornerstone of the business and as the years rolled on they became ever more advanced. The outbreak of the First World War did little to slow Humber's rate of production, with new models emerging in 1915 and 1916. These machines included such things as an innovative 6hp flat-twin, available in both water-cooled and air-cooled models.

Unfortunately, interest in Humber motorcycles began to wane throughout the latter half of 1920s. Its competition success had started to dry up (its last major win coming in the ACU Six Days Trial of 1923) and when sales began to slump the decision was made to permanantly halt motorcycle production.

RUDGE

Despite a tragic first sojourn into competitive racing the Rudge motorcycle became an extremely competent racing machine, and the first choice for great riders such as Graham Walker.



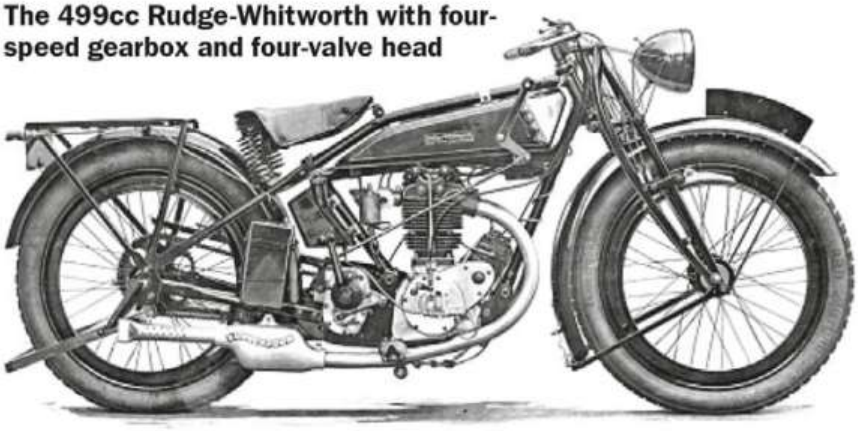
A handsome 1911 Rudge model at Coventry Transport Museum

One of the ironies of the Coventry-based Rudge motorcycle manufacturing company is that the man who gave his name to the machines, Mr Dan Rudge, had died more than 30 years before the first Rudge motorcycle was manufactured. Another interesting point is that this bastion of the Coventry industry wasn't actually founded in Coventry at all, only moving there after the widowed Mrs Rudge had sold Dan's bicycle making business to Coventry businessman and solicitor George Woodcock.

Woodcock moved the outfit to Coventry in the mid-1880s, and enjoyed some good years, though by the time Woodcock died in 1891, the company was struggling. A merger in 1894 saw the creation of Rudge-Whitworth Ltd.

By 1898, Rudge was building 27,000 cycles per annum, rising to 50,000-plus by 1905 and 75,000 in 1908. An early motorcycle effort (c1904) was unsuccessful, but 1910 prototypes proved more satisfactory and in January 1911 a production machine was announced. It featured a 500cc overhead ioe (inlet over exhaust) engine, made by Rudge. Drive was direct though there was a clutch-equipped version too.

The 499cc Rudge-Whitworth with four-speed gearbox and four-valve head



A first foray to the TT in 1911 brought tragic consequences with the death of a rider, while there was also the introduction of the famous Rudge 'Multi' gear system. There was no TT visit in 1912, then a second place in 1913, before Cyril Pullin won the 1914 Senior TT. The road-going range had expanded too, with a gargantuan 749cc single offered, while a V-twin (the Multwin) was announced for 1915.



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Rudge suffered during the First World War, and the immediate post war years were no better. The design was becoming hopelessly antiquated and outdated; but there was a positive development in 1923, with a new four-valve ohv single, featuring a four-speed gearbox. Suddenly, Rudge was back in the game; the initial 350cc model was soon joined by a half-litre job, with the smaller model vanishing. Rudge's biggest failing at this point was its lack of decent brakes; this was rectified in 1928 with drums finally in place, while a saddle tank also appeared. Rudge had gone from being maker of an anachronism to building one of the most advanced motorcycles on the market in about five years.

The competency of the design was proved by Graham Walker's 1928 Ulster GP victory, while speedway was also happy hunting ground for Rudge. The 1930 TT was a pinnacle for Rudge; five out of six Junior and Senior podium positions were filled by the make, with Junior victory for Tyrell Smith, Senior for Wal Handley.

With the world heading into a financial crisis, Rudge – like all – suffered, but continued through the 1930s to offer quality machines, while EMI bought the company at the end of 1935. Production moved away from Coventry to Hayes, Middlesex. During 1938 Rudge launched its last new model, the 98cc autocycle, which continued alongside others in the range. By now, the range-topping Ulster was a smart and stylish 500, pretty much equal to anything else in its category. But it wasn't to survive the war; the Rudge trademark was sold to Raleigh, which also acquired the cycle side of the business.

IN SUMMATION

Thank you for taking the time to read through this short supplement – I sincerely hope that you found it informative and interesting. Naturally, had we more space and more time we would have included more of the great marques that laid their foundations in Coventry. Perhaps that is a project worth thinking about in the future and one in which we may be able to squeeze in the Omegas, Allards, Sparkbrooks and all the other glorious machines that did not quite make it into this booklet.

This supplement could not have been completed without the help and support of Coventry Transport Museum chief executive, Gary Hall, who was kind enough to show us around the museum, pointing out intriguing machines such as the stunning Lea-Francis pictured below. An emphatic 'thank you' must also be extended to photographer Gary Chapman, whose considerable skill with a camera can be seen throughout the course of this supplement (the evocative photograph of the bombed car on pages six and seven is a personal favourite of mine).

Credit must also be given to Damien Kimberley and his excellent book Coventry's Motorcycle Heritage, which was a key resource in the writing of this booklet.

The importance of Coventry as a centre of motor production cannot be understated. The motorcycle industry of Coventry took 80 years to develop into one of the most – if not the most – prevalent in the country. It certainly was a city of motorcycles.

Michael Barraclough



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